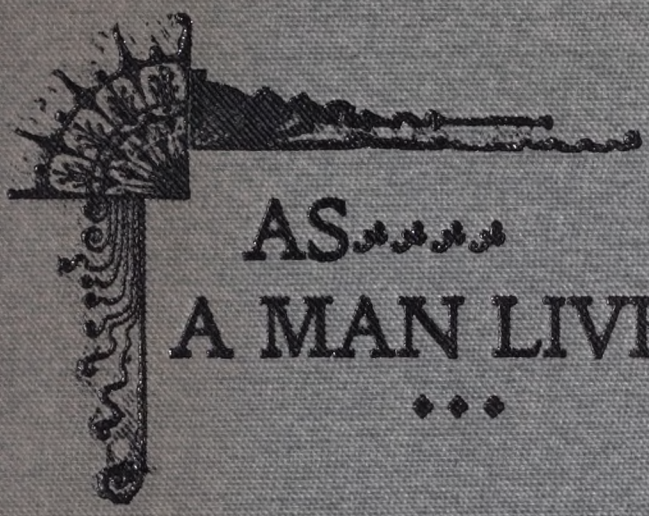

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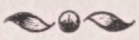

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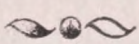

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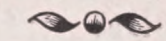

CHAPTER I.

"You are the one to blame, Stella; to say such unkind things of Janet. She is not rich like you, and her one dollar is more to her than your ten are to you."

"Well, I despise poverty, and everything connected with it, and I was going to add, good people also, but I will make an exception in your case, Belle, for I sometimes think I almost love you, although you are forever pulling me up, and making me think meanly of myself."

"Does anyone ever do that?" said Gladys. "I thought you were supreme in your own estimation, and superior to all of us in every way. But don't let us quarrel. What are you going to give Miss Wise for her birthday? We have collected fifty

dollars, and have not been half through the school yet, nor asked any of the younger children for contributions.''

"Get a silver-mounted travelling bag," said Stella, "it would only cost a hundred dollars, and if the youngsters come forward handsomely, we shall get that much."

Just then the door opened and Janet came into the room.

"Oh, girls!" she said. "I have an idea if you are all willing. I was passing by Reggie's door a moment ago, and heard the doctor say as he was leaving, 'The child must go to the sea before the hot weather comes, or I will not answer for the consequences.' Now I was thinking that as we have not decided on a present for Miss Wise, it would be nice to make up a purse, enough to defray the expenses of Reggie's trip. What do you all say to that? Miss Wise has so many to care for; there is her invalid mother, and her aged father, besides Reggie and the home she has started for poor girls. I feel sure

that she will only sacrifice herself, instead of taking the rest she needs, if she has to pay Reggie's expenses at the sea-shore."

"Well, I for one, do not agree to it;" said Stella. "The child is nothing to us, and I will not give this money for sick children."

"Shame!" cried all the girls. "Then you can take your money back, for Reggie's trip will not cost nearly so much as the travelling bag, and we can do very well without your contribution."

So it was decided that the child should go to the sea, and Stella's money was returned to her, for all the girls declared they would not have it.

These four girls were the eldest pupils in the school, and when vacation came they would leave "Richmond House" and Miss Wise, never to return as students.

Stella Ramona was a Spanish girl, rich, haughty, domineering, and not at all a favorite in the school.

Belle was a tiny creature, the daughter of a clergyman, not pretty,

but with a sweet face and gentle winning ways, which made all the girls regard her affectionately.

Gladys was the daughter of a rich merchant. She had a happy nature, that would be a sunbeam in any home, rich or poor. The girls said that her very hair was sun-kissed; (it was golden brown in fact.) She had laughing grey eyes, and her figure was prettily rounded.

Janet was an orphan, and had been placed in the school by a gentleman who called himself her uncle. She was a stately girl, very dignified and graceful, but with a face too sad to be called beautiful, although the features were clear cut, and the cast patrician.

The girls were gathered in Stella's room. Wide windows looked out upon the lovely California landscape, a long stretch of rain-washed meadows, delicately green, low hills veiled in brilliant evening haze, and sunset-glowing skies. Janet sat looking out with silent appreciation, upon the familiar beauty of the scene. Inside

all was equally brilliant, for Stella loved bright colors. She was reclining now on a couch half buried in silken cushions of every hue. Belle was nestled in a big armchair, her white dress thrown into strong relief by the black fur rug which covered her seat. Gladys was swinging energetically in the hammock which was stretched across the alcove.

Miss Wise had furnished the rooms neatly, but plainly, and the girls had finished the decorating according to their own tastes. Stella's room was like the boudoir of an oriental beauty; Gladys' chamber plainer, colder, but equally well furnished; Belle's little room had been turned into a white bower, with inexpensive curtains and rugs, while Janet's room remained as she found it—neat but bare.

"Richmond House" was a high-class boarding school for girls, just outside the pretty town of Milford, and within a few hours' ride of San Francisco.

Reggie, the subject of the dispute among the girls, was Miss Wise's

nephew, a little crippled boy, whose mother and father were dead. He had been ill for some time with slow fever and attendant weakness and the doctor had ordered him to the seaside. Through the kindness and generosity of the girls, he was able to go with his aunt, for when they heard Janet's story they all doubled their contributions.

The little fellow was delighted. He had never seen the sea, and had no idea what it was like, except from the pictures he had seen and stories the girls had read to him. He imagined that it was going to make him strong and well, and that soon he would be able to do everything like other boys.

After the commencement exercises the girls separated for their homes, and Reggie went to the sea, where he lay all day upon the warm sand, watching the waves break over the children's naked feet, and dreaming of the time when he too could run and play with the rest. And health and strength crept slowly into his veins with the California sunshine.

CHAPTER II.

Fifteen years before our story opens a gentleman and a lady were walking the deck of an ocean steamer, waiting with eager anticipation for the ship to reach the wharf at New York. She was delayed for a few hours, because the vessel ahead of her had been quarantined on account of a supposed case of small-pox on board.

The gentleman, Jack Stanton by name, was irritable and impetuous, and evidently greatly troubled in mind; lately his wife had watched him closely to prevent him doing something desperate. Had it not been for a promise to her, she would many times during the voyage have feared that he would throw himself overboard. Now he could control himself no longer.

"Why the devil are we kept here?" he cried. "The captain might have found this out from the custom

house officers, and got us in ahead of her. It's just my cursed luck!"

"Jack, dear, an hour or two can make no difference, now that an ocean separates you from your creditors," said his wife softly.

"Hang it, Agnes, I shall not feel safe until we are in California. They will never look for me there. Then, in a new land," changing his tone, "with my little wife and baby, I shall begin a new life. They tell me money is made so fast out there that I shall not only be able to satisfy every creditor, but clear my name and go back to England and take my place in that rank and position to which I was born."

"Jack, dear, if you would only promise me that in starting on this new life, you would try to get money honestly, and not by gambling, I should be so happy; and perhaps in California I can earn something. I have been well educated you know, and in a new country they must need teachers, and—"

"Once for all, Agnes, I shall get

money as I can, for get it I must; but I will not have my wife grinding at the mill, for that has never been the way of the Stantons or Hamiltons, and it shall not be mine. No, little wife, you must let me be the bread-winner, and in my own way. But come! the passengers are beginning to land and we have no time to lose.''

Jack Stanton gathered together their small possessions, Agnes carried the baby and they were soon lost in the crowd.

Presently there was a commotion among the passengers who were having their baggage examined. In one of Jack's trunks, safely hidden, he supposed, were a number of small pieces of jewelry, watches included, which the custom house officers immediately seized, marching Jack off to pay duty on them, although he stormed and declared that he would not, neither would he give them up. He was finally compelled to leave the trinkets, however, when he became aware of the fact that he would

not have money enough to buy tickets to California, if he paid the duty demanded.

"My cursed luck again," he said. "Is this going to follow me right along, I wonder?"

"Do you think they will trace us by those things?" asked Agnes anxiously. "For I fear, Jack, that you did not get them honestly."

"I have taken precautions against that, you may be sure, and if anyone asks you where you are going, say Colorado still, as you did on the boat. All our luggage will be checked there."

After many hindrances they arrived in California in nine days from the time they left New York. Jack made the acquaintance of a Californian, Tom Henshaw, on the train. Tom had a mine in Chico, also a store, and he offered Jack a house, rent free, and a position in the store, until he could look around and find something better to do.

The store was just such a place as one sees in any mining camp; a large

wooden shanty divided into two rooms. In the front room was the store. One side of it was devoted to men's dry goods, while the other side held groceries, liquors and tobacco. The back room was used for a concert hall at night, and for a court room, and place of general assembly in the daytime. Jack soon turned this hall into a gambling den, and many were the fights which took place in there, fights in earnest in which Jack seldom came off victorious. Tom remonstrated, but he had grown very fond of Jack, and was generally found taking his part in a brawl, even when he knew that the other man was right.

Agnes pleaded with him to give up this life for the sake of their child, but she pleaded in vain. She dreaded to think that some day her little Janet might be the daughter of a murderer, for shots were frequently exchanged in this gambling hell. She had never been a strong woman, and the constant worry and anxiety about her husband, together with the

hard life to which she was not accustomed, soon proved too much for her. It was only two years after Jack Stanton brought his wife to the little mining town, that he buried her in the small but populous graveyard, where most of the dead had been suddenly stopped in their picturesque careers by various kinds of gun and pistol balls.

For a time after his wife's death, Jack did try to do better. He drank less of the "pizen" sold in the store, and he gambled less in the room behind. He had been drinking heavily, and was but the wreck of his former self. He still ran the faro bank, for, he said, "Janet and I must live, and I'm not fit to work now." Besides, there was little honest work for any but miners in the town. The one short street held several stores like Henshaw's, and many saloons, bearing such legends as, "Miners' Delight," the "Bull-pup" and "Harrigan's Hall." The principal trade of the place was in "pizen" whiskey, appropriately

named, and the only amusements were card playing and dancing. When particularly festive, the "boys" were in the habit of riding furiously down the little street, shooting to right and left, and yelling like painted Indians. Then they would combine their forces, raid the saloons, holding up the barkeeper and faro-dealers, while they helped themselves liberally to money and drink. The invariable rule was to finish these scenes by shooting out the lights, often leaving a rifled saloon and sometimes a dead proprietor behind them, while they passed on in search of more fun.

Mrs. Stanton and Mrs. Henshaw had been almost the only respectable women in the place. Now Mrs. Henshaw was left again without any woman's companionship.

Little Janet was four years old when her mother died. Every man in camp was devoted to her, and kind Tom Henshaw promptly offered to take the little girl home to his wife.

Mrs. Henshaw was not quite so willing, although there was plenty of

room in the superintendent's house, and plenty of food. But she did not like Jack, and was jealous because Janet was prettier and brighter than her own children.

At last, however, Tom had his way, and little Janet was installed as a member of the Henshaw family.

For a time things went on smoothly. Jack, during his spare moments, gave the children lessons, and two of the Henshaw boys became quite well grounded in Algebra and other studies.

Stanton had plenty of friends among the miners, and many a stormy hour they passed, listening to his tales of English life, for he always spoke of a life they knew nothing about, although there were many Englishmen among them.

"Say Jack," they would say, "how d'you know so much about sech big bugs?" or "Say, ole feller, did you ever know this yer lord Eversham that hed th' speedy hosses? I say, boys, he's a-rusticatin' in our humble sassiety incog. and he's shore a juke or a lord himself."

Then Jack would stop his "yarning," and explain hastily, "No, no, I'm only a gambler like some of you, and have never been anything else. Fact is, boys, I'm not half as good as those of you who earn an honest living."

He would never allow the Henshaw boys to come into the gambling den, and often said to Tom,

"I am glad that my only child is a girl. A boy might have inherited some of my characteristics, but Janet will be like her mother."

The little girl was very fond of her father, and spent as much of her time with him as was possible. She was a pale, quiet little creature, very quaint and old-fashioned in her manners, and the little Henshaws were too rough and rude for her. Stanton liked to have her with him, and it was owing to her company partly that he kept sober. His little one was always welcome, except when he was gambling. She had stolen in once or twice, a timid little figure in gingham apron and sunbonnet, during the

morning hours after an all-night game. But the savage faces, the ready pistols, the lights still burning, because no one would stir to put them out, all these things frightened her, and most of all her father's stern reproof, or worse still, the fearful look he wore when he was too much absorbed even to notice her.

That look was never quite effaced from her memory; in after years it was vividly recalled to her.

One stormy night in December a large number of men had gathered in the hall, some playing, while the rest looked on. Jack was winning steadily, and drinking far too much, as he repeatedly treated the crowd from his winnings.

The rain beat against the windows, and the wind blew at such a terrific rate that it seemed every moment as if the building must go over. Still Jack won. Tom, seeing how excited he was getting, crept up to his side, and whispered,

"That's enough for to-night. Leave it, and come home."

Jack paid no attention.

"More drinks!" he called. "And this time let us drink to the storm."

He gave no heed to Tom, who pleaded in his ear, "For Janet's sake, come!"

Some of the players, seeing his extraordinary luck, and feeling angry at their own continued loss, hinted that it could not be square. This made Jack furious.

"Curse you, take that back!" he shouted.

"We all saw Tom give him a tip," cried a looker-on.

"Yes," cried others, "we all did." Quick as a flash Jack sprang to his feet, and putting his hand behind him, cried, "Who accuses me of cheating?"

"I do," said the man who had first insinuated.

Instantly two shots rang out, and both men fell. In the pause that followed, the howling of the storm was a fearful sound and the building rocked. Large trees were blown over, and the crash of their falling shook the ground like an earthquake.

The two men were hastily examined. Jack's accuser was dead, but Jack still breathed. They carried him to Henshaw's house and summoned the doctor, who found that he was fatally wounded, and could live only a short time.

All night Tom sat by his dying friend; he feared that Jack would never recover consciousness, but with the first flush of dawn he opened his eyes, and recognizing his friend, said:

"Thank God, I did not die last night. I have only a few hours to live, Tom, and I have something to say. The money that I have made by gambling, will pay for Janet's education. I wish it had been made in some honest way, but surely a merciful God will not visit my sins on her innocent head! I want her to be brought up as a lady, for some day, if she is restored to her own she will occupy a high position in England. Ah! I had hoped to see that day to restore her to the place and position that I through my sin have defrauded her of. It would

have made me happy—but what right had I to expect happiness? I threw away all chances of it when I first started in life. Three times my poor old father paid my debts—heavy ones—and he would have done so the fourth time, but I had some conscience left, and skipped for this country, intending to make money enough to let me return and pay my creditors. I can't do it now, but there is a little left for Janet! and, Tom, I wish you would have a small marble grave stone placed to the memory of my poor wife, with her name and age. These you will find in a small case in my trunk, if you will get it for me.—That's it. Thank you. Please bury me near my wife, but don't put my name on the stone or make any mention of me. I was not worthy to be known in life, and am not worthy to be remembered after death. Janet will know that I lie beside her mother.

"Oh! for a few more years of life! I would turn over a new leaf. I would do my duty by Janet. I have

promised before, Tom, but this time I surely would fulfill."

Tom saw that he was getting weaker. He pressed the dying man's hand tenderly, striving to comfort him, begging him to finish his instructions quickly, and rest.

"Give this package to Janet when she is eighteen," said Jack, taking it from the case he had asked for. "And now, let me see my little girl before it is too late."

Tom went for Janet. He found her just outside the door, poor child, sobbing as though her heart would break. She had heard a commotion in the house, and partly surmised the cause. Kind-hearted Tom took the little girl in his arms, talked to her soothingly, warned her not to excite her father, and finally carried her to the bedside of the dying gambler, who, with all his sins, had yet been a tender husband and a kind father.

CHAPTER III.

Janet was twelve years old when her father died, and at the time when our story opens she was seventeen.

Mrs. Henshaw declared she should not stay any longer at school, or all her money would be used up and nothing left to pay for her board. "And the girl with her citified airs can not stay here for nothing," she declared.

Tom had had his way up to the present time about her schooling, but he had been compelled to leave her clothing to Mrs. Henshaw, who had spent the money on her own children, sending Janet cast-off things from the wardrobe of her own girls.

Janet did not know that her father had left her anything. She thought it was through Mrs. Henshaw's kindness that she had escaped the orphan asylum.

Mr. Henshaw did not know how badly Janet was treated. He knew

that she did not get on very comfortably in his family, and therefore he had kept her at school for five years continuously, even during the vacation times. Now there was no help for it, she must come back to the only home she had ever known, and he determined to keep a sharp lookout and see that she was not ill-treated.

It was again December when the stage containing Mr. Henshaw and Janet arrived in Chico. They were put down at Tom's residence, and greeted cheerfully by the family.

Janet was taken to a room in the top of the house, very cold just then, but very warm in summer. Having removed her hat and brushed her hair, she went down to the dining room. The family had already taken supper, so she sat down alone with Mr. Henshaw.

"Now my girl," said he, "you must try to make yourself happy here. I dare say the life won't be exactly to your taste, but try to make the best of things, and then I think they won't seem very bad, and remem-

ber I am always your friend when you want one."

"Oh uncle," said Janet, "how shall I ever repay you for your goodness to me! I should indeed be ungrateful if I made myself unhappy."

"That's right, dear; just make up your mind not to be discontented, and you won't be."

"No, uncle, I am going to try to be useful, if you and aunt will be patient with me. I know I shall be stupid at first. I think I could take care of your books, and teach the children—"

"Indeed you cannot," said Miss Henshaw. "I am father's bookkeeper, and Annie teaches the children. You can help mother with the housework."

Janet replied cheerfully, but the prospect was not encouraging.

Supper over, Annie said in a patronizing way, "I will carry the things away to-night, for perhaps you are tired."

Janet thanked her and being glad

of an excuse to be alone said good-night, and retired to her room in the attic.

The next morning she was told what her duties would be.

"You will do the ordinary housework, Janet," said Mrs. Henshaw, "and help with the garden, and take care of the chickens. I'll help you for the present; I'll do the cooking until you learn how, for I don't suppose you have learned that or much else that is useful at school, so far as I can see."

Poor Janet! She had not been taught housework at school, or anywhere else, and they had not much patience with her. Sometimes Mrs. Henshaw would say she was too slow, too long about her work, and when she tried to do it more quickly she was told that it could not have been well done, for nothing could be well done in so short a time. If she made the beds first, Mrs. Henshaw was quite sure that they had not been aired. If she left them for a time, she was lazy and slovenly.

It seemed to the poor girl that, try as she would, she could not please this family. She spent all of her spare time alone in her little room, reading, thinking and trying to plan for her future.

Whenever she ventured to use the piano Mrs. Henshaw made scornful remarks about "girls who work for their own living having no time for such fol-de-rol," yet her own daughters practiced two hours a day. They had not had good teachers, and their playing and singing was far from edifying. Janet herself had shown decided talent for music at school, and had a very sweet contralto voice. She was passionately fond of music and the situation was trying in the extreme.

The three girls were often invited to entertainments given by the miners; these frequently took the form of dances, where there were, at the most, ten or twelve women and girls, and often more than a hundred men.

Janet attended one of these, wishing to make herself agreeable, but

she was so disturbed by the roughness and familiarity of the men that she never repeated the experience.

Mrs. Henshaw was secretly pleased at this decision, for she well knew that Janet was more attractive than either of her own girls, and had observed the attention she received.

CHAPTER IV.

One beautiful day in spring, when the hills were golden with poppies and the birds were singing in merry chorus, Janet felt lightsome of heart in spite of her troubles, and having finished her morning's work she asked Mrs. Henshaw's permission to go out for a little walk.

"And who's asked you to go a-walking?" asked the woman, her jealousy manifested immediately.

"No one, Aunt."

"Come now, don't you tell me no lies. You're likely agoin' to meet some man, and you should tell me about it."

"Indeed," said Janet angrily, "I do not even know any man well enough to walk with him. Why do you always mistrust me? And why do you treat me as if I were ill-bred and given to deceiving you? I do all I can to please you, but I can never succeed. I suppose you have a right

to demand my services as you give me my board, but you have no right to behave so cruelly to me. If you dislike me so," Janet was sobbing by this time, "why don't you let me go away? In San Francisco I could get my own living teaching music, or in some other way, and it would be much more congenial to my taste than being your servant, for that is what I am."

It was a bold speech and Mrs. Henshaw was purple with wrath.

"You ungrateful little hussy! Talking to me that way! I'll teach you! Go to San Francisco indeed! In less than a month you would be on the streets; it's just your kind that get there. Putting on such grand airs, and making yourself out so much better than the rest of us! And what are you, I should like to know? A gambler's daughter, yes, a murderer's daughter!"

"You shall not speak against my poor father in that wicked way, now he is gone!" cried Janet. "Whatever he was he was a good father to me. I only wish he was alive now, for I

have not a friend in the whole world." The girl looked heart-broken and her voice had a pitiful sound.

Mrs. Henshaw was moved, in spite of her anger, by this cry of the orphan.

"Well," she said, softening her tone and manner, "you need not tell your uncle that we have quarrelled, and if you will promise to be in by five o'clock, you may go for your walk."

Janet longed to be alone, and knowing that this was impossible in the house, she said sincere thanks for the concession and hastily put on her hat, and escaped from the hateful place.

She found a pretty canon where the water bubbled and gurgled over stones, making little cascades. Rank graceful ferns waved their tall fronds lightly in the fragrant air, and the banks were covered with moss and maiden-hair. Occasionally a bevy of quail would come down to drink, but when they caught sight of the intruder, would whir away among the trees.

At any other time Janet would have enjoyed this woodland scene, for she loved nature, but was now feeling so sad and hopeless that she hardly noticed anything except that she was alone, which was some comfort.

She sat down, and hiding her face in her hands burst into a violent fit of weeping. The more she thought of her lonely condition the more miserable she grew. Where could she go? What could she do? She, the daughter of a gambler and a murderer! Yes, the cruel words were true. She knew, she remembered.

"No one will have anything to do with me," she thought. "And perhaps this is why they treat me so badly. Are the sins of the fathers indeed visited upon the children?"

She was sobbing forlornly, entirely absorbed in her unhappy thoughts, when suddenly a shot rang out. Before she had recovered from the shock a young man bounded through the brush and jumped across the stream just at her feet. Her first impulse

was to fly; but she could not possibly make her escape without passing him. Before she could move, he raised his hat and said;

"Please pardon me, Miss Stanton. I thought I had the woods entirely to myself, and was just going after those quail when, in so doing I almost jumped over you. Did I frighten you very much? I am really awfully sorry."

"No," said Janet, "you did not frighten me so very much; but please tell me how you know my name."

"I owe you an apology," he said, "for venturing to use your name without an introduction. Well, the best reparation I can make is to tell mine. It is Duncan, Malcolm Duncan. I came to Chico nearly a month ago. I am representing a company in England who own this mine, and I have come out here in their interest, as well as my own. Not having much to do this afternoon I thought I would bring my gun; and I greatly suspect I was violating the law against quail shooting. However, I did not

kill any, so you can not have me arrested."

He laughed, but Janet remained grave.

"Miss Stanton," he ventured, "you look unhappy and you were in tears when I startled you. Can I help you in any way?"

"You can answer a question for me if you will," said the friendless child. "Are the sins of the fathers visited upon the children?"

"No, a thousand times no! unless the children sin. I know to what you refer, Miss Stanton," he continued kindly. "I know a great deal more about you than you do about me. I have often been to the Henshaws' house, and have wondered why you never join them in the evenings, so I asked about you, and heard your story from some of the miners. I have suspected for some time that you were not happy, and indeed your looks confirm my suspicion."

Janet could not restrain her grief and was sobbing in a forlorn fashion that went straight to his heart.

"Why do you stay with these people, Miss Stanton? They are not your equals in any way." Janet dried her tears, and answered quietly,

"Well, you see I scarcely have a choice in the matter. I have no other home. Uncle is very good to me, and would not permit them to treat me as they do, if he knew, but I could not tell him and make mischief between him and his wife. Besides, would it mend matters, do you think? I fancy aunt's disposition is such that she would never forgive me."

They sat in silence for a moment. Then Janet asked hastily, "Please tell me the time, Mr. Duncan. Aunt told me to be in by five."

"You will just make it if you start now," said he, looking at his watch. "May I walk to the bottom of the canon with you?"

She rose, and he helped her over the rocks. At the foot of the canon he raised his hat respectfully, said good-bye, and left her. Janet was glad that he went no farther, for at the bottom of the canon she was almost in sight of the house.

To her surprise her aunt met her and inquired if she had enjoyed her walk.

Janet thanked her sincerely, glad of a kind word from her, and told her briefly of the pretty canon, and her enjoyment of it.

Truth to tell, Mrs. Henshaw, like all bullies was a coward, and she was much concerned lest Janet should tell her uncle of their unpleasant words.

Janet felt happier than she had for some time. She instinctively knew that she had found a friend in Mr. Duncan, and began to wonder how long he would remain in Chico and whether she would ever see him again.

That same evening while she was washing the dishes and tidying the kitchen, he called. Not finding Janet in the parlor he said that he had only called to leave a book for Miss Stanton, and took his departure immediately.

Mrs. Henshaw and her girls looked from one to the other, and then at Mr. Henshaw.

"Well," cried Mrs. Henshaw,

"what do you think of that?"

"Think of what?" said Tom.

"I think it is time you knew what sort of a girl you've got in your house, Mr. Henshaw."

"What do you mean, wife? Are you speaking of Janet?"

"And who else should I be speaking of? It was only this afternoon she told me she didn't know a man well enough to go walking with him."

"Perhaps she does not. What reason have you to doubt her word?"

"Every reason in the world. She asked to go out walking to-day, a thing she has not done since she has been here, except to go on an errand, and—"

"Wife," interrupted Tom, "you astonish me? Is the child compelled to ask you every time she goes outside the house? I want you to understand that she is as free to go and come as our own children are. I have thought for some time that she was not being well treated here. What's the reason that my girls don't take their share of the house work, as they

did before she came? It is no kindness to them."

"And keep her in idleness? No, Tom, that girl's no good, you may depend, and if it hadn't been for my keeping her at work she would have gone plumb to the bad. That's my opinion."

Tom was getting very angry. He rose to his feet, and said to his daughter, "Call Janet." Annie obeyed silently. Janet came in looking wonderingly from one to the other.

"Janet," asked Mr. Henshaw, "how long have you known Mr. Duncan?"

"I don't know him, Uncle."

Mrs. Henshaw cried triumphantly, "That's the second lie I've found her out in to-day. You can't believe a word she says."

"One minute please, wife. I have the floor."

Taking the book in his hand, he turned to Janet and said, "This book was brought here to-day by Mr. Duncan, and left for you."

"It was very kind of him;" said

Janet simply. "I met him in the canon this afternoon. He startled me jumping through the brush after some birds he was shooting at." She looked straight in her uncle's face while she was speaking, and was so calm and self-possessed that for a moment the women were struck dumb. Mrs. Henshaw quickly recovered herself, however, and looking at her husband said,

"You believe that, I suppose?"

"I don't doubt it," said he. "But I'll soon prove if it's true." Putting his hat on he left the house.

"You can go to your room, Janet," said Mrs. Henshaw. "And when I want you, I'll send for you."

"I cannot go until this matter is explained," said Janet with spirit. "You have no right to order me to do so. I never saw Mr.Duncan in my life until this afternoon, and I shall remain here until uncle returns. I know where he has gone, and what is his mission."

Mr. Henshaw soon found Duncan and proved to his perfect satisfac-

tion that all Janet had said was true. He called his wife and daughters and taking Janet's hand in his said,

"We all owe you an apology, Janet, for bringing a false accusation against you. I am very sorry, and can only hope that you will forgive us."

Janet put her arms around her uncle's neck, and kissing him, said, "I don't believe you ever thought me guilty Uncle, and I cannot think what I have done to make aunt distrust me so."

"Come wife," whispered Tom, "tell the girl you don't mistrust her, and that you are sorry about this."

But the woman's pride was too much hurt at being baffled in her suspicions, so she remarked spitefully, as she left the room, "Well! If you are innocent I must say you looked guiltier than innocent people usually do."

The two girls, who were disturbed and envious that Janet was noticed at all by Mr. Duncan, slipped out without a word.

For a day or two life settled down into the usual routine for Janet, except that her aunt was, if possible, more exacting, and the girls constantly on the watch to discover if she met Mr. Duncan, by chance or otherwise.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Henshaw's two sons were in offices in San Francisco, but a bank holiday falling on Friday, they had from Thursday evening until Monday morning, and quickly decided to spend the few days at home.

They had not seen Janet since she was a little girl, and were, naturally, struck by her stately grace and dignity, and impressed by her refined manner and conversation.

"What stunning brown eyes she has!" said Charley.

"What jolly, shiny brown hair!" said Tom. "It's just the color of my horse. I tell you, there are not many girls like her even in San Francisco."

They found many ways of pleasing Janet, such as a ramble in the woods, a row on the river, or a ride on a spirited broncho. She had been a fearless rider as a child, sitting any kind of a saddle, or simply a

blanket, so she particularly enjoyed riding. Again, Mrs. Henshaw, mother-like, would excuse Janet from her house-tasks in order to please the boys. Mr. Duncan was frequently of the party, and insisted on providing Janet with a horse to ride.

Mary and Annie Henshaw soon perceived the marked attention Mr. Duncan showed Janet, and could not conceal their jealousy of her.

"I don't believe Mr. Duncan knows what sort of a father Janet had or he would not show her so much deference," said Mary. "I am going to tell him for I think he should know." This she did, putting poor Jack Stanton in the worst possible light.

Mr. Duncan interrupted her by saying, "Are you not rather severe, Miss Henshaw? I know Mr. Stanton's history from the day he first landed in California, and he was not all bad. Why, even your brothers have told me how kind he was to them, and how much they learned under his instruction. Charley says that he would not be able to hold the

position he does now, if he had been less advanced in his studies when he first went to San Francisco. I think you do Mr. Stanton a great injustice, Miss Henshaw; unintentionally, I have no doubt, for you surely would not willingly speak unkindly of the dead. We are none of us perfect, you know."

After the boys returned to the city, Janet's dull life began again. Mr. Duncan called frequently, but Mrs. Henshaw always contrived to give her some employment, during the time of his stay; so for some days she did not see him. But one day she met him on her way home from the post-office. He raised his hat, and walking along with her said,

"Miss Stanton, have I said or done anything to offend you? You seem to avoid me lately. Why is it?"

"Indeed, no, Mr. Duncan, you have not offended me, neither have I avoided you, but my days of pleasure ceased when the boys left. My time is so fully occupied now that I rarely have ten minutes to myself through

the day; when I go to my room, I am too tired to read or write or do anything but retire for the rest I so much need."

"Well, Miss Stanton, I shall bring my horse around to-morrow, and ask you to go out for a drive."

"Indeed, no, Mr. Duncan! you must not. I shall not have the time, and I am quite sure aunt would not consent."

"Well, we shall see," said the astute young man. "She will not refuse if I ask one of her daughters to accompany us. Trust me, I will manage it."

The next morning Miss Henshaw received a polite note, asking if she and Miss Stanton would go for a drive with him in the afternoon.

Mrs. Henshaw and her daughter were flattered by this attention, but they could not see why he should invite Janet.

The girls were ready when he arrived. He quietly helped Miss Henshaw into the back seat of the carriage, then on the moment's impulse

invited one of the children to go with them, and placed the happy little one beside her sister, thus leaving the seat beside his own free for Janet. Miss Henshaw was much annoyed by this arrangement; in fact, she was so humiliated that she scarcely spoke during the drive, so Janet and Mr. Duncan had the conversation all to themselves.

They went through a pretty, fertile valley, and up through a cool canon, where ferns and mosses grew, on to a mountain road, among the red-woods. Janet enjoyed herself greatly. The scenery was grand. Mountains and pine-wood forests, with the river, a peaceful flood, hundreds of feet below them. Sometimes an open plain with cattle grazing, stretched below them, then the pines and red-woods closed about them again. They were just emerging from a dense forest, when suddenly the horse stopped short, snorting violently. Mr. Duncan wondered as to the cause, but Janet saw, and exclaimed,

"Look, Mr. Duncan, there is a bear!"

Stretched on a branch overhanging the road, was a small brown bear. The horse refused to go under the branch, in spite of Mr. Duncan's urging, so there was nothing to do but to wait bruin's pleasure.

"I wish I had a gun with me!" cried Mr. Duncan. "I've tried to find one of those fellows. I would give anything to take his skin home to England as a trophy."

They halted fully twenty minutes in the cool, fragrant shadows, and bruin, having finished his nap, coolly climbed down the tree, and retreated into the forest.

On reaching home Miss Henshaw gave full vent to her feelings, and declared she had only been taken along to play gooseberry, and that Mr. Duncan and Janet had been exceedingly rude to her. Mrs. Henshaw declared that her daughters should not be insulted again in such manner, and that in the future Janet could remain at home until she learned polite behavior.

Janet's life grew more and more

irksome. The weather was exceedingly warm, and with the hard work she was compelled to do she looked so thin and ill that at last Mr. Henshaw noticed it, and asked her if she were sick.

"Not sick, Uncle, but tired. I suppose it is the heat chiefly, and I really have more work than I am able to do. Belle St. John, one of my school fellows at Richmond House, has asked me to visit her, and if you are willing I should very much like to go."

"Of course I am willing, my girl. Anything to see you looking better than you have done lately. When do you want to go?"

"Saturday if I may, Uncle. It is Belle's birthday, Monday, and she wants the three girls who graduated with her to be present on her eighteenth birthday."

Mrs. Henshaw of course objected, but Tom had his way, and as he put Janet on the stage, slipped a purse into her hand, whispering,

"Buy yourself some clothes like

city girls wear. The money's your own."

She did not have a chance to say good-bye to Mr. Duncan before leaving. She was sorry, because he had always been very kind to her, and she would at least have liked to thank him, but he did not know she was going, so of course was not at the stage to see her depart. She never thought for a moment that he would care about her absence or miss her at all. She felt herself of so small importance in any one's life.

CHAPTER VI.

The short journey was uneventful. The dust was blinding, and the sun was very hot.

Janet could not believe that she had been only a year with the Henshaws. It seemed an eternity, and she began already to dread returning to them.

The sun was sinking behind the Golden Gate and the water seemed strewed with gold dust as she boarded the ferry boat to cross the bay of San Francisco.

At the wharf were Belle and Mr. St. John waiting to receive her, and a very warm welcome they gave her.

The St. John home on Pacific Avenue, so pretty and comfortable, seemed a haven of rest to the weary girl. Belle immediately carried her off to her own room, and having removed her hat and wraps drew her to the light. Taking Janet's face between her hands, she said,

"My poor Janet, what have you done to yourself? How thin you have grown, dear! And how large and sad your eyes look! Have you been ill?"

"No," said Janet. "But I sometimes wonder that I did not lose health entirely. However, it is a long story, Belle, and I must tell you some other time. Perhaps we ought to go down to your father. He will wonder what has become of us."

"Wait a minute, Janet," said Belle, blushing prettily. "I have a secret to tell you; I could not write it, but —well, I want your congratulations."

"Dear Belle! are you really engaged? Indeed I do congratulate you with all my heart. And who is the lucky fellow?"

"He has a nice name—Paul Curson. You shall meet him to-morrow evening. Now let us go to papa. He has been wanting so much to know you, Janet."

The Rev. Mr. St. John was an Englishman, at this time an Episcopal clergyman in San Francisco. He was

a clever man, fond of study and research, but with strong opinions of his own; these same opinions had forced him to give up a good living in England, and come to America. He showed great conscientiousness, but, according to his friends, very little tact and business shrewdness.

Mrs. St. John was in every sense of the word a helpmeet to her husband and a truly good woman.

"Mamma is away from home, nursing one of her poor women," said Belle, on the way down stairs, "but she said to give you her love, and tell you that she would be back to welcome you just as soon as she could be spared."

"She is so kind!" said Janet, wishing already that this peaceful haven might shelter her always.

"Well, Papa," said Belle, as they entered the pretty parlor over-looking the bay, "is Janet anything like you imagined she would be?"

"Yes, and no," said Mr. St. John, regarding her closely through his glasses. "She is a great deal

more like an English girl, than I should have thought one brought up in California would be. How old were you when you left England, Miss Stanton?"

"I believe that I was not more than two years, but I am not quite sure, and of course I do not remember anything of England."

Dinner being announced at this moment, Mr. St. John said to his daughter:

"I think we would better not wait for your mother, for I expect that our guest must be quite famished after her long journey."

"Mamma told me not to delay dinner for her, Papa, as she could not tell when she would be home."

So Mr. St. John offered an arm to each of the young ladies, and in a graceful but rather ceremonious manner conducted them to the dining room.

Janet thought that never in her life had she sat down to such an elegantly simple meal. How different it was to any in her aunt's house,

where was sufficient abundance, but everything in confusion.

Mrs. St. John soon returned, and gave Janet a cordial welcome.

"How is your patient, Mamma?" asked Belle, when she had seen her mother's wants attended to.

"Better, much better," said Mrs. St. John. "I really believe it was nourishing food that she wanted more than anything else. She will not beg and could not work. I am so thankful I found her. By-the-way, Belle, I called on Martha, the colored woman who lost her little boy the other day, and in trying to console her I said that one so young could not have committed any sin, and that no doubt the child was in heaven. 'Ah, ma'am,' she said, 'but they are all strangers there and little Tommy was so shy!' and then she burst into tears."

The whole evening was a bright and pleasant one to Janet, and she really forgot herself and became as jovial as the rest.

The St. Johns were charming people, congenial and happy together,

with no one to upbraid or misjudge. It was a revelation to Janet, that a home could be so peaceful and harmonious.

The next evening, after dinner, Mr. Curson came. He was a tall, dark man, with a long nose and a heavy black moustache. He and Belle usually spent the evening in the music room, but this night they remained in the parlor. When Mr. St. John returned from church he joined them, with Mr. Farnam, Gladys' father.

Mr. Farnam was very fond of airing his views. He launched into the financial question by saying "The science of finance is the most vital study we have to consider."

"Oh, no," said Mr. St. John. "There is at least one more important."

"Money," insisted Mr. Farnam, "is the propelling power. Everything depends upon it. All the subjects that the public agitate, even religion, if the discussion doesn't start with money, ends with it.

Everything inevitably turns to the money question. It is the great purchasing medium, and must always have the strongest influence over human affairs. I believe the more plentiful money becomes, the sooner we shall reach complete barter, or service for service. Some people think higher prices will give the workingman more profit, while others say low prices will benefit the masses. Whatever increases the amount of money in circulation benefits society, and the more contracted the currency, the lower prices will be, simply because people have not the money to pay. And the determination of the question rests simply on the power to influence others."

"I believe," said Mr. St. John, mounting his hobby, "that we are influenced by environment. The strongest soul may sink in an atmosphere of impurity. The two greatest curses in life are to be overworked, and to be underfed. The man who has nothing to do, ceases to produce, so he consumes, and is a loss

to the prospective wealth of a country. We are not all equal and cannot be made so until the handicaps of birth and heredity are overcome, but we can all be raised above the degrading influence of pauperism. What will do this? Not charity and almsgiving—they only put a premium on idleness. Inspire the poor with self-respect, find the work to do, and raise their wages to a point, at least, that will insure their living decently, with food that will keep both body and mind healthy. Let the law fix wages at a rate that will enable them to live respectably, and then the spectacle of a whole family crowded into one room, with unwholesome, insufficient food, will be a thing of the past."

"That is true," said Mr. Farnam, "it is the want of money that makes slaves of us. To feed the higher nature, we must cultivate the beautiful side of life. And to do this, we must have money. Think what cravings the poor must have for those things their nature demands, but

which they are unable to get. Poverty is the greatest curse on earth. The desire for something better is an advance upward. The woman, (I am speaking of the poor,) who has better things in her house—better furniture, and more rooms, is not directly benefiting her neighbors, but she sets others to work in the same direction, and is the centre of a movement toward improvement. The lack of money lowers our standard. If we cannot have the best we must put up with an imitation, and then we relapse into that soul destroying state of things, where we are easily satisfied with unworthy things. The general demand today is not for the best in literature, or art; we are content with mediocrity, because it is all we can afford to pay for."

"Then you think," said Mr. St. John, "that the higher the standard of living the more money will circulate?"

"Yes, because it is the money expended constantly here and there that circulates. That is why the

needs of the rich benefit the poorer classes."

"But surely," said Mr. St. John, "as long as the world lasts there will be the poor."

"Of course there will be," said Mr. Curson, "for some have not the ability to keep money, once they get it, any more than others have the power of spending it or can correct the desire to hoard it."

Janet listened intently. It was pleasant to hear discussion that was not of the shop, saloon or mine.

"I am thinking," said Mr. Farnam, "of enlarging that home Miss Wise started. I shall include boys, and try to help both the boys and girls to help themselves."

"How shall you be able to do it?" asked Janet, who was interested.

"Well, my dear young lady, all of my pupils who are without a home, can still find one there, as of old; those who have homes can come and learn a trade, and they will be paid from the first for all the work they do. I only make one stipulation,

which is, that as soon as a pupil is proficient at his trade and making money, he must give one half day, or evening, a week to the school."

"That is excellent," said the minister, "I think I can send you a dozen children at once."

The next day being warm and bright, and Belle's birthday, the four girls and their escorts took an extended trip on the bay, and all dined at the St. Johns' in the evening. Janet was like one in a dream of delight. There was only one thing to mar it. She began to mistrust Mr. Curson, although she was angry with herself for what she tried to persuade herself was unreasonable and unjust.

"What right have I to judge him," she thought, "when I have known him only one day?"

"By the way," she asked Belle, "what has become of Reggie?"

"Have you not heard? You know that he always had a sweet voice. He used to amuse himself singing while at Monterey. He got

much stronger, and their cottage was right on the beach. Miss Wise played his accompaniments for him, and they often noticed an elderly gentleman listening. Well, one day Miss Wise had left Reggie in his chair, and gone to speak to a friend at some distance, when this gentleman came up to Reggie and asked if he might go in the cottage and hear him sing. The end of it was that he offered to send Reggie and his aunt to Europe that his voice might be cultivated, for he said it was phenomenal. So they have gone, and are at present in Dresden, I believe. Is it not grand for Reggie ? They say the old gentleman is so rich, and has no children of his own."

"How fortunate," cried Janet "And we helped it on, you know, by sending him to Monterey."

"Oh yes!" said Belle, "he always thanked us for his good fortune. Poor little fellow! I hope he will grow strong and well."

Janet was much surprised, one day, on returning from a walk, to find Mr.

Duncan there. He said as he had a little business to transact in San Francisco, he thought he would call and see her before returning to Chico.

Mrs. St. John invited him to remain for dinner, as it would be served in half an hour.

When Mr. St. John was introduced, he said, "Duncan, Duncan! Was your father's name Malcolm Duncan?"

"Yes, that was my father's name, as it is also mine."

"Then we were at college together, Christ Church, Cambridge," said Mr. St. John. "He was a clever fellow, and a warm friend of mine. I welcome you for his sake, as well as for your own, my boy. But tell me, is he yet alive?"

"Oh yes! and as hale and hearty as yourself. He is M. P. for—shire."

"Did he never enter the church? He used to say he never would."

"And he never did," said Malcolm. "But he is a very public spirited man."

After dinner the young people went

to a concert, and Malcolm, being pressed to make the St. Johns' home his while in the city, returned with the girls.

"When shall you go back to Chico, Miss Stanton?" he asked, on taking leave of his friends. Janet shuddered at the thought and said that she dreaded to think of it, but supposed she must, some day.

After lunch Mrs. St. John called Belle and asked her to go and take some dainties she had prepared for her sick people, and having seen her depart, she asked Janet to step into the study. When they were alone she said in her kindly way, "My dear, I imagine, from what I have heard you say, that you are not happy in your home. Why is it? I ask in kindness if you feel free to give me your confidence."

"Oh, I'm afraid I am very wicked to say such things, but somehow the whole life there is hateful to me."

"On which side are the Henshaws related to you? Your mother's or father's?"

"I don't know; I have never heard," said Janet. "I was taught to call them uncle and aunt, but I sometimes wonder if they really are my relatives. Uncle is very kind to me. But the rest of the family are not, and they are entirely different from my parents, as I remember them. Besides, none of their relatives are ever mentioned as relatives of mine."

"Is there no way of finding out about it?" asked Mrs. St. John.

"None that I can see," said Janet sadly.

"Well, my dear, of course if they are related to you, they have the first claim; but if they are willing, and you would like it, I shall be very glad to offer you a home here with Belle. I know you would not wish to lead an idle life, and you need not. You have great talent for music and a good voice. You might join the choir at church and give music lessons as well."

"How sweet and kind you are to me, dear Mrs. St. John! That is just what I should most like to do.

But shall I not be intruding if I remain an inmate of your house? Will you not weary of having another girl in the family?"

"When I do, I will let you know;" said Mrs. St. John smiling. "Now I must go, for I have some visits to make. I hope you will be happy with us, my dear;" and so the matter appeared to be settled. She kissed Janet affectionately and called her "my girl."

"I'm only afraid that I shall be too happy," said Janet. "I will write to uncle at once."

Mr. Henshaw made no objection to the arrangement, so on the following Sunday she took her place in the choir, and on Monday commenced with two young pupils, three more being promised in a week.

What a different world it seemed to Janet now! How bright everything looked, and how kind everyone was to her. She thought that no one was so happy as she, and the days flew by instead of dragging along as they did in the old life.

"Why," said she, one morning at breakfast, "I have actually been here a whole month!"

Mr. Curson came every evening and as he was very fond of music, and quite proficient himself Janet saw a great deal of him, for she never refused to play or sing when she was asked to do so.

One morning Mrs. St. John and Belle were from home. Janet was practicing a solo she was to sing the following Sunday. Mr. Curson was announced, and at once advanced towards the piano.

"Ah! how lucky!" he said. "I wanted you to try this over." He unrolled a sheet of music, saying, "It is a pretty thing, by Calis a Lovalles. Do you know it?"

"I think not," said Janet slowly; "why did you not bring it this evening, Mr. Curson?"

"I wanted to give you a longer time to practice it, in case you will kindly sing it at a concert to-morrow evening. The lady who was to have sung it is seriously indisposed."

"I will do my best," said Janet, running it over carefully. Presently she arose from the piano, and turning to him begged to be excused, remarking that it was the hour for a pupil's lesson.

When Belle returned, Janet told her of the request Mr. Curson had made.

"How sweet of you, dear, to comply!" said Belle. "And how much Paul appreciates your ability. He did not even ask me, you see."

"I suppose," said Janet gently, "that he thought it would suit my voice."

Belle went with Janet to the concert, and Mr. Curson escorted them both home. Janet's voice was very much complimented, and Mr. Farnam, who was present, asked her to sing with Gladys at the opening of his new home. Janet consented, and later was practicing her song when Mr. Curson called. Janet was indignant. He knew that Mrs. St. John and Belle were at Santa Cruz for a few days, and that she did not court

his presence. Janet turned to him, and said sharply,

"Mr. Curson, you have no right to come here so frequently when Belle and her mother are away, and if I refuse to receive you, you must not wonder."

"Don't be offended, Janet," he begged. "What harm can it do if I come in for half an hour sometimes to listen to your music? No one pleases me at the piano as you do."

"I shall certainly not play for you, and as the morning is the only time I have to practice, when Mr. St. John is out, you will force me to refuse to sing at the concert. Besides," she said, "by what right of courtesy or friendship do you call me by my Christian name?"

"I beg your pardon if I have offended you," he said humbly enough.

"I am offended by your intrusion," said Janet firmly. "And I insist that you leave me now and that we never refer to the subject again."

"Very well," he said smiling. "I

shall always obey your wishes." His look and manner were even more displeasing than his words.

When he was gone Janet rushed up to her room, locked the door, and burst into tears. Her first thought when she was more composed was to tell Mr. St. John all, but she was afraid of the effect on Belle.

"It would make her so unhappy," thought Janet. "After all the kindness of these dear friends, how could I do anything that would cause them one moment's unhappiness? No, I must fight it out by myself. Perhaps he will give up his foolish persistence now. And perhaps after all, I have exaggerated the danger.—I certainly have not encouraged his attention."

She told the servants never to admit any one to see her while she was practicing her music, and resolved never to be in the house alone at any other time. She had always taken the morning hours for practice, and she must continue to do so, because that was the only time

when she could be sure that Mr. St John was not at home, and it was necessary that the house should be quiet when he was in his study.

CHAPTER VII.

The evening of the entertainment arrived, and it was arranged that Mr. St. John should take Janet in a closed carriage, as she must appear in evening dress. They were just preparing to start when a messenger came begging Mr. St. John to go to the deathbed of a man who had been seriously wounded by an accident on the street.

"The doctor says he may die any minute," said the messenger, "and the man says that he has something he must tell you."

"I am sorry, Janet," said Mr. St. John, "I will see you there at any rate, and if possible I will come before the concert is over and escort you home. If I can not be there in time the carriage will be waiting, and I must depend on some of our friends to see you safely home."

The hall was crowded when they arrived, and the concert commenced almost immediately. Janet and

Gladys wore simple white dresses with La France roses. The other ladies who took part, being married, and older, were handsomely gowned in heavy silks.

"Who is Gladys' friend?" they asked. "What a fine musician she is, and so young!"

"She is an orphan, and a schoolfellow of Gladys' and Belle's," said Mrs. Farnam. "She has always shown great talent for music, and now she has taken it up as a profession as she had the best of instruction at school. She gives lessons too."

"I shall certainly send my children to her," said Mrs. Valentine.

"And so shall I," chorused several others, anxious to patronize the protegé of wealthy Mrs. Farnam. Janet was introduced and complimented, and promised as many pupils as she could desire.

Meeting Mr. Farnam, she inquired if he had seen Mr. St. John since the concert was over?

"I have not, my dear young lady," said he. "But your carriage is

waiting, and I will see you safely into it, if you will allow me."

Taking his arm, she descended the stairs, stepped into the carriage, and was just about to close the door, when a voice said,

"I will see Miss Stanton home." Before she could remonstrate Mr. Curson had entered, and they were whirled rapidly away.

"At last!" said he. "Janet, will you tell me why you avoid me? You know how I regard you; I love you, Janet, and only you. Will you marry me? And I am rich," he added eagerly. "You shall have every luxury. There will be no more drudgery of teaching."

"How dare you!" cried Janet. "Loose my hand this moment! Do you forget that you have asked Miss St. John to be your wife and that she is your betrothed, faithful and true to you?"

"Oh! Little Belle!" He said carelessly. "She will soon forget me. I don't want her, I want you! Say

you will marry me, Janet. I will manage the rest."

The frightened girl burst into tears.

"Don't cry dear," he whispered with a tenderness that dismayed her. "We shall be happy together yet. And Belle is such a home baby, she will not care much."

Janet made no reply, but waited in silent terror and indignation for the drive to end. At last the horses stopped. Janet sprang out, refusing Mr. Curson's proffered hand. No sooner had she alighted than the carriage rolled swiftly away. Then, and not until then, did she realize that they were not at her home, but in a strange part of the city.

"How dare you!" she cried angrily. "Tell me where I am this instant!"

"You are at my home, Miss Stanton. I could not take you back to the St. Johns' with your eyes all red from weeping; Mr. St. John would have wanted to know the cause. I will call my landlady. She will take care of you until you are calmer, and then I will take you home."

"I shall not go inside the house with you," cried Janet, and in desperation she started to run down the street. At the corner she met a gentleman, and stopping him she said,

"I have lost my way, and this man is annoying me. Will you kindly see me home?"

Before he could answer Mr. Curson said,

"This lady is my wife. You had better not interfere. I will see her home myself."

"It is false!" cried Janet despairingly, "I am no relation of his." Curson tried to take her arm, but the stranger noting the wickedness in his face, gave him a blow that sent him staggering. Then he asked Janet, "Where is your home?"

"If the cars have not stopped," said Janet, "will you kindly put me on a Polk or Sutter Street car, and I can manage very well."

The stranger understood her motive. They soon reached the cars. He stopped one, raised his hat and left her.

When she rang the bell, Mr. St. John opened the door himself, saying as he did so, "I did not hear the carriage, Janet. I have been listening for it. Are you not late?"

"Yes," answered the girl wearily. "Late and tired. Please let me go to my room."

"Why, certainly, my dear. I will hear all about it tomorrow. I'm afraid you are working too hard. You look pale."

He regarded her gravely.

"Oh no!" she cried. "I love my work! Dear Mr. St. John, I want to thank you for all your kindness to me. Yon are the only friends I have in the world, and I shall never forget your goodness."

She ran hastily upstairs and shut herself in her room. Mr. St. John listened, murmuring, "Poor girl! it is sad to be an orphan, even with the best of friends for aid and comfort," and resumed his paper.

Janet removed her evening dress, put on a wrapper and sitting down

began to ponder over the strange thing that had happened to her.

"Should I let Belle know what a villain she is trusting? It would break her heart! How could I tell them! Would they believe me guiltless? There is only one thing to do. To fly and leave no word, or let anyone in the world know where I am. But where can I go? To Chico—drudgery, and my aunt's bitter tongue? Never. No, I would rather work for strangers. I must go right away," thought the foolish girl, not capable of deciding wisely in her excited frame of mind. "I cannot meet Mr. St. John in the morning. He would be sure to question me, and what could I say to him? I cannot even leave a note, for what could I write? I must leave the house like a culprit and coward, and let them think what they may of me. Oh, if I had never come to San Francisco! If I had never known any other life, I might have been contented in Chico, where I was at least safe. Why was I ever born, to bring trouble to my

dearest friends? Surely the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children! Poor little Belle! What will she think? Well, I shall never know, for I will never see her again. I pray heaven to avert the dread fate that threatens her."

With the dawn she arose, after a sleepless night, and gathering together a few of her most necessary things in a small bag, she put on her plainest dress and hat, stole down stairs, opened the door softly and hurried down the street. Not trusting herself to look behind her, she fairly flew over the ground, fearing irresolution might overtake her. She did not realize the irrevocable step she was taking or its sorrowful consequences. Her only present thought was to get away from it all, even as if she were fleeing from guilt on her own part.

CHAPTER VIII.

The breakfast hour came, but Janet did not appear. The maid asked Mr. St. John if he would wait for her, and he said, "No, and if she is not down by nine, take something up to her room."

At nine the maid knocked at her door, and receiving no answer opened it only to find it silent and vacant. Mr. St. John was alarmed, on returning at noon, to hear that Janet was gone.

"I think she must have left the city," said the maid, "for a small valise and part of her clothes are gone."

"No doubt," said Mr. St. John, "she must have gone to Santa Cruz to Miss Belle. I shall be going there tomorrow and will bring them all home with me." In his heart he did not believe this plausible explanation of Janet's absence, but hoped

that it would check the servant's gossip.

The next day, on reaching the hotel where Mrs. St. John and Belle were staying, his first inquiry was for Janet.

"Why, we have not seen her, Papa What do you mean?"

"I'm afraid," he replied gravely, "that there is something wrong somewhere. I have not seen Janet since the night of the concert, and I begin to feel anxious. You have not heard from her?"

"Not a word," said Mrs. St. John. "Where can she be? Did anything go wrong at the concert, do you think? Perhaps her music was not appreciated."

"On the contrary, the concert was a great success both socially and financially, and Janet was much complimented on every side. They thought it quite remarkable that so young a girl should be so finished a musician."

"What can we do?" cried Belle. "We must find her. Could you not

telegraph to Chico, and find out if she is there, Papa?"

"Yes, I was just thinking I would do that at once."

He soon returned saying,

"Mr. Henshaw is in the city. He has gone down to see Janet on business, and they suppose that she is with him."

"Perhaps she is," said Mrs. St. John, "still it is strange that she did not say anything to you about it, and quite unlike her. There is nothing secretive about Janet. I have found her always so open and upright in speech and behavior."

"Well," said Mr. St. John, somewhat relieved, "we shall return to the city tomorrow, and no doubt we shall find her with her uncle."

They walked along the beach, which was almost deserted, talking of Janet. It was a lovely evening in Autumn. The sunset was glorious, and the water sparkled as though innumerable stars were dancing on the waves. But in spite of the beauty of their surroundings their hearts

were sad, for they had grown very fond of Janet. It grieved them to think that there was something hidden in her life. Who and what were her parents? "She is no ordinary girl," said Mr. St. John. "If Mr. Henshaw is in the city when I go back, I shall ask him what he knows of them."

"Was that Miss Ramona who passed us then?" said Mrs. St. John. "I am afraid she is getting a little wild. I see, or rather hear her every evening out here, and I do not like the class of men she is with. I don't think her mother can know of it; she has been quite ill since they have been here, but Stella does not seem to think it her place to nurse her mother. Of course they are rich, and can afford nurses and all else they require, but I am afraid that Stella has no heart. I think her mother worries about her a great deal."

"Who are her girl companions?" asked Mr. St. John.

"She has almost none. She doesn't

want any, I think. I have not said anything to Belle, but I notice that they scarcely speak, and I am not sorry."

"Would it not be kind to speak to Stella, my dear? Perhaps a word of warning would not be taken amiss?"

"I have already done so, but she was quite indignant, and said she was old enough to take care of herself."

"Since then she has flirted desperately with Mr. Curson," continued the lady, after a pause, as if weighing her words.

"With Mr. Curson?" said the minister. "Then no wonder Belle resents it! I am glad we are going home. I have given my consent to the marriage, but I sometimes wish that I had not. Of late I have not liked the man. I believe that he is a hypocrite, and I wish Belle would break off the engagement with him."

"She never will," said his wife, "her life is bound up in him. She does not think he is at fault in this matter, and blames only Stella."

On reaching home the next day

they found that Mr. Henshaw had called, and believing Janet to be in Santa Cruz had said that he would come again the next day. About half an hour after dinner he was announced.

"I am very glad to see you sir," said Mr. St. John, "perhaps you can tell us something about Janet."

"Is she not with you?" asked Mr. Henshaw with much concern.

"We have not seen her for three days," replied the minister.

"Then she was not with you at Santa Cruz?" asked Henshaw, thoroughly alarmed. "This is exceedingly strange."

"I will tell you all I can, and then you can advise me what to do," said St. John, and he rapidly told about the concert and Janet's farewell.

"I have a sealed package to deliver to her," said Henshaw, "it was her father's last request that I should give it to her on her eighteenth birthday. I came to San Francisco for the express purpose."

"It is terrible!" said Mr. St.

John; "we must put the case in the hands of the police and advertise in all the papers. We have lost three days already!"

"Had she no relations except yourselves in this country?" asked Mrs. St. John.

"She has no relations at all that I know of," said Mr. Henshaw. "I am no real relative, only a friend of her father. He taught her to call us 'Uncle' and 'Aunt'."

"You astonish me, Mr. Henshaw. She did not know this, did she?"

"No."

"Then how kind you have been to her! Treating her as though she were your own child all these years."

"There you are wrong, sir. Her father left more than enough for her education and board, and I have brought her the balance. I also meant that she should not find out we were not relatives until after she opened this package, when she was eighteen. What good would it have done to make her feel friendless? I'm afraid that my people have not

treated her as well as they should have done. Instead of Janet being in our debt, we are indebted to her, for she earned all she got, and more. She deserved kind treatment too, but I fear that she did not always get it. I say it with sorrow."

"How came you to know her father?" asked St. John.

"I was coming from New York, sixteen years ago last June," said Henshaw. "I had been there on business connected with my mine. I met Jack Stanton on the train. He had his wife and little Janet with him. He was a stranger in a strange land, seeking his fortune in a new country.

"Well, I kind of took a fancy to him. He was a good-hearted, good-natured, generous fellow, and I felt sorry for the little wife who looked so delicate. Finding that he had no definite place in view, I told him he could help me in my store, until something better turned up. Two years after they came, Janet's mother died. I guess the life was too rough,

for she was a lady. Eight years later Jack died, so I took little Janet, and kind of adopted her. But as I said before, she has cost me nothing, and now I must find her and deliver this package to her."

After he had gone Mrs. St. John said, "There is one thing that puzzles me. If Janet's father went there without any money, how did he manage to make so much as an assistant in a store?"

"Perhaps he was a partner at last," suggested Mr. St. John. "But I am inclined to think that there was not much money left by her father. I believe Mr. Henshaw is, what he said Jack was, a generous, good-natured, honest man."

The next day a paragraph appeared in all the papers, describing Janet and offering a reward for any information about her. Mr. St. John enquired of Mr. Farnam, and at all the houses where she had pupils, but no one knew anything of her strange disappearance. In fact they did not know as much. She seemed

to have disappeared as completely as if she had been a phantom, and faded from their midst.

Mr. Henshaw was forced to return to Chico with the mystery of her disappearance still unsolved. When he told his wife the news, she said, "Just as I expected. I always said the little minx was no good. The restraint of a minister's house was too much for her, so she waited till the coast was clear, and then skipped. I have no doubt she read your paragraphs about her, and laughed in her sleeve, the ungrateful little hussy!"

"Come!" said Tom, with unusual sternness. Not so hard on the girl, wife! I won't have it, I say. The people she has been stopping with have no reason to think such a thing, and why should you? You were always too severe with her, and if it is as you say, though I'll never believe it till it's proved, it was your unkindness drove her to it."

He was grievously worried. What could he do with the package left in

his care? The St. Johns promised to telegraph directly if they heard any tidings, but no message came. He made a journey to San Francisco in search of news, visited the newspaper offices and police headquarters, but was forced to return home without any tidings.

Mr. Duncan was greatly distressed and secretly employed private detectives on the case, fearing foul play.

* * * *

Meanwhile Mr. Farnam's house was progressing finely. It was named, "The Helping Hand," and twice a week there were lectures or concerts. There were six workshops for the different trades, and six classrooms for different branches of study. It was pronounced a boon to society, because it took so many boys and girls from the street; a boon to the poor, because they were paid for their work from the first; and good for the children, for what child does not like to earn money? How proud they are with their first earnings, and

how important when they help to support the family!

Gladys spent most of her time at the home and was never so happy as when she had a class of girls around her. The girls, too, loved her bright face and her happy disposition.

Belle went there occasionally, but her time was almost entirely taken up with sick people.

After her return from Santa Cruz, Mr. Curson began to be less attentive. At last a week passed during which Belle did not see him. She suffered in silence, as women do, enduring the suspense patiently, until one day at the "Home" she picked up a paper and her eye fell on this notice:

"Married, in Santa Cruz, by the Rev. Mr. Black, Stella Ramona and Paul Curson, both of San Francisco."

The print blurred before her eyes, the room grew dark and she would have fallen had not Gladys caught her in her arms.

"Poor Belle!" said she tenderly, for she had seen the notice, and

understood. "She has fainted, children; open the window, and one of you run for a glass of water."

It was sometime before her eyes opened. When they did, she said, "Oh, Gladys, have I been dreaming, or is it true?"

"Is what true, dearie?" said Gladys, trying to soothe her.

"That in the paper!" gasped Belle, and swooned again.

Gladys sent for Mrs. St. John, and together they lifted Belle and carried her to the carriage. On the way to Belle's home Gladys told Mrs. St. John the cause of her daughter's condition.

"It is my fault," said the mother. "I ought to have warned the child. I saw enough in Santa Cruz to open my eyes to the truth. I am only glad that Belle is not married to him, instead of Stella. Stella will be a match for his maneuvers where Belle would die of grief."

They carried her to bed and sent for the family physician. "She must have had a great shock," he

said. "There is danger of brain fever."

For days her life was despaired of, and when the fever left her she was so weak that they feared she would never get back her strength.

Gladys came every day, brought flowers and talked or read to her when she was strong enough to bear it. Mrs. St. John said Gladys was Belle's tonic, and the doctor declared that her happy face was better for the invalid than medicine.

Mr. Curson's name was never mentioned. She gradually gained strength, and on Christmas day was able to take her place at the family table.

"Do you think," asked Gladys one day, "that Belle will ever care to resume her duties with the sick and poor?"

"Yes indeed," said Mrs. St. John. "Belle loves her poor people, and is beloved by them. I think that is where she will find her consolation. It is a woman's nature to want to be loved, and to want to be helpful, and no

matter how sharp her own pain, she hides it so long as there is someone else to be comforted or encouraged. There is not a woman in the world who does not like to feel that someone relies upon her in trouble, or that someone comes to her first with joyous news. A woman's first thought is to make herself beloved, to make her life of use to someone, and that is why kindly eyes and a pleasant smile are always ready to cover her own bitter heart burnings. I have no fear for Belle, for she is very like the rest of her sex."

"Dear Mrs. St. John, you are endowing all women with your own loving nature."

"I have not more heart than you, Gladys. And we are not all blessed with your sunny disposition."

"The sun has a way of changing the spots upon which he shines, especially in our land, where one is up today and down tomorrow. Wishing for the unattainable makes many women disagreeable."

"It is very easy for you to be phil-

osophical, my dear," laughed Mrs. St. John. "You have never known poverty."

"I don't believe that riches bring happiness," Gladys said gravely. "Being usefully employed brings the truest happiness. I feel very sorry for those who have nothing to do."

"Mrs. St. John," asked Gladys, after a pause, "have you heard anything of Janet?"

"No, and it is a month now since she disappeared. Strange she doesn't write to us! If, indeed, she is still alive."

"I think," said Gladys, "that Mr. Duncan was quite interested in her, and I think he would be the most likely to find her."

"Yes," said Mrs. St. John, "but even he has failed."

"Where is he now?"

"He left for England last week. He would have gone a week sooner, but remained to prosecute the search for her. He seemed sadly disappointed and depressed. I think I shall take Belle for a

ride on the cars. I fancy she can stand their motion better than that of the carriage. Will you join us, Gladys?"

"Yes, with pleasure, but I must leave you at the 'Helping Hand'. I have a class this afternoon when school is out." Mr. St. John, who had been reading to his daughter came out and greeted Gladys, and together they went for their ride.

Belle was very thin and pale, but she had a new look of sweet patience on her face. She did not like to be considered an invalid, and took up her work again, bravely and uncomplainingly.

CHAPTER IX.

After leaving the house Janet scarce paused for thought until she was many blocks from home. She then took a car which was crowded with workmen and workwomen, going to their daily occupations.

"I belong to this class," she said to herself. "I wonder if they cannot help me find something to do?"

One by one the men left the car, and when they had nearly reached the wharf Janet found she had the car to herself, excepting one girl. Summoning all her courage, she moved up to her and said,

"I am a stranger in the city. Can you tell me where I can find work?"

"I can't help you none," said the girl, "except by sending you to a employment office. What kind of work do you want?"

"Anything I can get, "said Janet; "but for reasons of my own, it must not be in San Francisco."

"Well, I'll give you Miss Johnson's card. I've got one in my pocket. She keeps a employment office, and I'm sure she'll help you."

Janet thanked her, and returned on the same car to the address given.

The office was not open when she reached it, so she waited outside with two or three other women until Miss Johnson came and unlocked the door.

"What kind of a place do you want?" she asked.

"I think I had better not choose," said Janet. "I'll take anything you offer."

"Have you ever done housework?" asked Miss Johnson.

"Yes, I have," said Janet, with a vision of Mrs. Henshaw's kitchen before her.

"Well, you don't look cut out for it. I have half a mind to send you to Mrs. Richardson. She wants a kind of nurse-companion, to go with her to Southern California. She is somewhat of an invalid."

"That would suit me," said Janet.

"Of course it would. It's a place

you wouldn't get in a thousand. It's only because you are first, and seem likely, that I tell you of it. Of course the lady will want references. Where have you lived."

"I'm afraid I shall lose the place," faltered Janet disappointed. "I am an orphan, and have never worked out."

"That is unfortunate. You look so likely. But I know Mrs. Richardson would not take anyone without references. She's been fooled once or twice already. Have you no friends in San Francisco who you could ask to recommend you?"

"No," said Janet. "I am a stranger here."

"Where did you come from?"

"Chico."

"Well, I like your face, so I will send you. Here is Mrs. Richardson's card. You must not go there before twelve o'clock, or else she won't be up. Stop a minute! You must take a note and I must do the best I can for you without references. I'll say I've known you for years. That will do, I guess."

"No," said Janet, "it will not do. I will not commence with her by telling a falsehood."

"Well, well, you are particular. Take the card and do the best you can. I will not have anything more to do with it. But you pay me two dollars and a half if you get the place and don't you forget it, mind."

"I won't forget," said Janet, "I thank you for the card."

Janet had not slept all night, and having eaten no breakfast began to feel very weak. Being far from the part of the city where she was known she slipped into a cheap restaurant and took a cup of coffee, saying to herself,

"I shall have to be careful, for if I fail to get this place I might have to live a long time on the contents of this little purse."

She felt refreshed after her light breakfast, and quite equal to meeting Mrs. Richardson

She remembered that she was not to go there until after twelve, and looking at her watch determined to

walk, which she did, reaching her destination a little before the time mentioned.

The door was opened by a pretty French girl, who informed her that Mrs. Richardson was in, and would see her in the library.

"I am so glad you have come. Take this seat near me, and let us talk," said the lady. "I was afraid Miss Johnson had forgotten all about me. I sent to her a week ago, and I must leave for Southern California tomorrow. I don't look much like an invalid do I? And I am not, though my doctor tells me I must take care of myself. Have you had any experience in nursing, my dear, if I should get sick?"

"I am sorry to say I have not," said Janet, "but I am quite sure I could do it."

"Then you have been companion instead of nurse?" said Mrs. Richardson. "Where have you lived?"

"I can give you no references, but I feel sure I shall suit you, if you will only try me."

"Oh dear!" cried Mrs. Richardson, "what shall I do? I have not time to send to Miss Johnson's again. How could she send me someone without references, and one who knows nothing of nursing?"

"Please try me, Mrs. Richardson," pleaded Janet. "I must get a place today of some kind, even if it is to clean windows."

"Have you no friends to go to?"

"None," said Janet. "I am an orphan and have not a friend in the whole world that I can go to."

"Well, I'll try you, but I feel sure that I shall be taken in again. What is your name?"

"Janet."

"Janet what?"

For a moment Janet hesitated, and then said,

"Miss Nomer."

"How strange! That means a wrong name. Oh dear, it is getting more mysterious! I like your face and the time is short. For those two reasons I will take you. How soon can you come?"

"I will stay now if I may," said Janet, "and perhaps I can do the packing for you."

Mrs. Richardson rang the bell, and saying lunch would be served in half an hour, told the maid to show Miss Nomer to the maple room.

Mrs. Richardson was a woman of about sixty-five, with snow-white hair, tall and rather stout. Janet noticed she walked with a cane, and her mantle was tightly drawn. Otherwise she seemed quite well.

After lunch Janet was taken to Mrs. Richardson's room to do the packing. She proved quite efficient in the art, and was praised for the careful way in which she handled the things. The next day they started on their journey, Mrs. Richardson, Janet and the French maid. Mrs. Richardson bore the journey very well, and Janet wondered in what way she was an invalid. She was very kind and they spent many pleasant hours together. Janet would either read, sing, or play, and when Mrs. Richardson was tired would

give her her tea, or if she felt like lying down, shake up the pillows and fan her.

They were sitting together at the close of one hot day, when suddenly Mrs. Richardson said,

"Janet, tell me your real name. Why did you have to enquire at an employment office for a place, or rather a home, for I presume you have no other place than this that you can call home. I like you very much, and I liked your face from the first, but I do not like mystery. Can you tell me the story of your life? or are there reasons why you should not?"

"Dear Mrs. Richardson, I owe you the truth for your kindness to me, and especially in taking me on trust as it were. So if you really care to hear, I will tell you."

The windows were opened wide; the moon was just rising, and a soft breeze, laden with the perfume of orange blossoms, came from the surrounding orchards. Mrs. Richardson was reclining on the sofa and

Janet was sitting on a low stool at her side.

The girl had just commenced her story, when suddenly Mrs. Richardson gave a cry and would have rolled off the sofa if Janet had not held her. Janet wondered what it could be. It did not seem like a faint, and yet she could not speak. She bathed her head and face, loosened her dress and sent the maid for the doctor.

As soon as he looked at her he said, "This is just what Dr. L—, of San Francisco, expected."

"What is it?" asked Janet,

"Total paralysis," said he. "She is not dead, and she may live for several days, or even weeks. "She may recover consciousness, but it will only be a living death at best. Put these powders between her lips, and if she moves or shows any signs of life send for me at once. If you do not send before tomorrow morning, I will call anyway; and I will send some one to help you with her. Put her to bed and make her as com-

fortable as you can. It is all you can do."

Janet asked if there was any special cause for the stroke.

"None," said the doctor. "Her own physician wrote me that he thought it could not be prevented, but was anxious to try a warmer climate. This is her third attack, I believe. How long have you been with her, Miss Nomer?"

"A little over six weeks," said Janet.

"Well she will not require you for six weeks longer, I think. But no one can tell. I will call tomorrow if you do not send for me before."

They carried the invalid to bed and Janet watched by her side all night; in fact, night and day for four days, she only left her to get an hour's sleep. At the end of the third day Mrs. Richardson moved her lips as if to speak, but no speech came, and on the sixth day she died.

After the funeral Janet was obliged to leave. She had no excuse for remaining any longer. As she closed

the door behind her she thought: "Friendless, and alone, where can I go?"

For one instant she thought of returning to Chico. Then the remembrance of her aunt's bitter tongue made her shudder. Besides, she did not even know whether she would be welcome.

She went to Los Angeles, bought a newspaper to find out where the employment offices were and tried them all without result, for the place was overrun with girls wanting places and all with good references.

She was told that not having any one to whom she could refer was very much against her, and that she had better keep the story of "nursing an invalid who had died," to herself, as it was a common one and a very easy one to make up. But she might come again tomorrow, they told her, and many "tomorrows," she returned, only to go away disappointed.

She had rented a small room in one of the poorest parts of the city and was very careful not to waste a cent.

Her landlady was a sharp featured, tall, gaunt woman, and Janet did not like her but she reasoned with herself, "She is honest and the room is cheap."

One morning Janet started early for a place about four miles from Los Angeles, in answer to an advertisement in the morning paper. She was unsuccessful, and returned feeling very down-hearted. When she reached the house of her landlady, she was astonished to see a large board with "To Let" on it.

"What can it mean?" she thought, as she rang the bell which echoed through the house, plainly telling her it was empty. She rang the bell of the next house and was told the family had all left by steamer that afternoon, taking everything they owned with them.

"And everything I owned too," cried Janet in despair.

"You look tired," observed the woman. "It's late for the likes of you to be looking for a fresh place. You'd best come in and have a

little supper with my boys."

Janet thanked her, and not knowing what else to do, accepted. After supper she asked the woman if she could not rent her a small room.

"Yes, but how am I to get paid for it?" said she. "You say you have lost everything."

Janet took a ring from her finger, and asked, "Will you accept this until I earn money enough to redeem it?"

"Well, that would pay for the room for a time, but what about board, Miss?"

"Oh, I will not trouble you about board. I will look out for that somewhere."

"Well, my dear," said the woman, "I wish I was rich and then I would not be hard on you, but you see I have four hungry boys and three of them earning next to nothing. It puzzles my brain to know how to get food enough for them. I often go short myself so as they can get enough."

"Where is your husband?" asked Janet.

"The Lord knows, Miss. He left me when my boys were all little, and I have never set eyes on him since. I've worked my fingers nearly to the bone, trying to keep starvation from the door."

"Ah, my friend," said Janet, "yours is a worse case than mine. You have five to provide for, and I have only myself. You have given me courage, and I had almost lost heart today!"

Janet had but ten cents left. The next day she spent five for a paper, tried again without success to find work, and went to bed hungry, with but five cents left.

Mrs. Smith came to her door to ask her if she had had supper. Remembering the four hungry boys, Janet felt she could not take it from them, so she said she was tired and did not want any; but she asked if either of the boys had brought home a paper.

"No, dear," said Mrs. Smith,

"they've got no money to spend on papers."

"Then I must get one myself in the morning," said Janet. "Thank you for coming up."

She slept soundly, in spite of her hunger, and when she woke wondered whether she should spend her last five cents for a cup of coffee or a newspaper. She chose the latter, saying to herself,

"If I get a place I shall soon have plenty to eat, but if I spend this for coffee, I may lose the last chance of getting employment."

She found an advertisement for a nurse girl, wanted at once. "Apply between 12 and 1 o'clock."

She went back to her room to wait, for she felt sure she should faint if she wandered about any longer. Feeling very weak, she went down stairs to ask her landlady for a piece of bread, fearing she would never get to the place indicated in the advertisement if she did not have something to eat. But that good woman was not in the

house. Janet was desperate. She went to the pantry, murmuring,

"I will just take one little piece, and then I will give them all a good dinner with the first money I get."

Disappointment again. Not a bit of anything eatable could she find, only a few raw potatoes and a little cold tea. She drank a cup of tea, and then toiled wearily upstairs again.

At twelve o'clock she presented herself at Mrs. Stewart's, and after being questioned and cross-questioned until she was on the point of tears, she was told she could come a week on trial at ten dollars a month.

"May I remain now?" asked Janet.

"Yes," said Mrs. Stewart, and ringing the bell, she ordered the servant to show the new nurse-maid to the nursery.

"Where is it?" asked Janet, as they left the room.

"At the top of the house," said the girl.

Janet climbed wearily, the stairs seeming to go round and round with

her. She held on tightly to the banister to steady herself. The housemaid went tripping gaily up, and finding Janet was some distance behind, she turned at the top of the first flight, and said, "You are pretty slow. Can't you hurry a bit?" Janet made a desperate effort to do as she was asked.

"How much farther is it——" she began faintly, then suddenly fell in a heap in the corridor.

"Sakes alive!" cried the girl, "what's the matter?"

She saw that Janet had fainted and ran down stairs to inform her mistress. "Fainted?" cried Mrs. Stewart. "Perhaps it is a fever, or something contagious. See if you can see a policeman."

Janet was finally taken to the hospital.

"What a mercy," Mrs. Stewart remarked, "she did not go into the nursery! There is no knowing what dreadful thing my darlings might have caught."

She did not think it necessary to

go and see Janet, or even enquire for her. In fact she never gave her another thought, but she watched the children for many days to see if they showed any signs of disease.

Janet, meanwhile, was comfortably cared for at the hospital. The doctors knew at once the cause of her illness, and soon brought her back to consciousness, but she was very weak for many days and seemed to make no effort to get well, and to have no care for anything.

She was sitting up one day, propped with pillows, when she thought she heard a voice she knew. Turning to the nurse she asked,

"Who is that young lady in the next room?"

"I don't know," answered the nurse, "she is a very sweet girl, a visitor to Los Angeles. She comes to the hospital every afternoon, to read to those who are well enough."

"Her voice is so like that of a friend of mine! For a moment I thought it must be her, but of course

it is only fancy, for she is in San Francisco."

"I thought you said you had no friends, Miss Nomer. Had you not better let them know where you are?"

"I said what was true, that I had no friends I could send to, and since I have been getting better, I have often wished I had died before returning to consciousness. Life is so hard! Death would be easier."

"You cannot say that," said the nurse, "you may have to begin your life all over again, in another world, and who knows what troubles might be there?"

"What makes you think that?" asked Janet. "It is horrible!"

"I didn't say I thought so; but I know some people do. Would it not do you good, Miss Nomer, to talk to some one about your troubles? It might help you to bear them better."

"No," said Janet. "No one can help me. But do you think that those people who believe what you said about having to live our life all over again, would think that the sins

of the fathers in this life would be visited upon the children in the next?"

"That is too deep for me; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll ask that young lady to come and talk to you tomorrow. She knows a great deal more than I do. Now you must not talk any more. You look quite flushed and excited."

The next day Janet was not so well, and the second day she was still too weak to see anyone, but on the third day after her conversation with the nurse she was much better, and again sitting up in bed. The nurse came in during the afternoon, and said,

"The young lady is in the next room, and would like to read to you, if you care for it, but mind, you must not talk. Wait until you are stronger."

Janet was in a ward, but had a bed in the farthest corner of the room, near the window; she was shut off from the others by a Japanese screen, which the nurse drew aside to admit

the visitor. The girls' eyes met, and the nurse heard the cry,

"Janet!"

"Belle?"

Then they were clasped in each other's arms.

"I am so glad to have found you, dear Janet!" cried Belle. "But I am not going to ask you anything now. In fact, you need never tell us, if you would rather not. I had strict orders not to let you talk, so I must read you something cheerful."

She read for half an hour, all the time holding Janet's hand in hers. When she left she said,

"I shall come again tomorrow, and mama will want to see you. She and papa are both here. Oh, how glad they will be to hear the news!"

Janet was overjoyed to meet her friend once more, and for a time could think of nothing but her good fortune in having been brought to the hospital; for she felt sure she would never have seen them otherwise.

But soon other thoughts came—less pleasant ones. She could not be deceitful, neither could she tell Belle the truth, and the only thing left to do, she thought, was to escape from the hospital before Belle came again. What about Mr. Curson, where was he, and had Belle found him out?

She waited until the ward was quiet for the night, and then stole out of bed, and attempted to walk, but she was so weak that she drooped helplessly, falling, fortunately, on the bed. She did not lose consciousness, but lay quiet, wondering whether they would send her back to her old land-lady the next day. Then she remembered that she had not a cent of money.

"I am actually in this hospital as a pauper," she thought. "What can I do when I get well enough to be turned out? Starve?" And she burst into tears.

The next morning she inquired of the nurse if there was another free hospital, explaining, "I have reasons

for not wishing to remain here any longer."

"You are ungrateful, Miss Nomer. Have we not done all we could for you? And you found a dear friend yesterday! What can you be thinking about?"

"Indeed I must seem ungrateful," said poor Janet, "but there are reasons which I cannot explain."

"You must content yourself here a few more days, and then you will be well enough to go wherever you like," was the reply.

In the afternoon Mrs. St. John and Belle came to see her. They were very kind, and would not let her talk much. The former said,

"I shall never ask you anything, Janet. You can tell me what you like, and nothing if you would rather not. We have very comfortable rooms, and this morning I secured a sunny, cheerful one for you, so directly they will let you be moved, I shall take you there, and you will soon get strong again. I saw the

doctor as we came up, and I think I shall go and ask him.''

She soon returned, saying,

"I may take you this afternoon, if I am very careful, and don't let you excite yourself.''

With the help of the nurse, Janet was soon dressed and carried to the carriage. The sun was setting as they left the hospital, and the golden glow seemed to permeate everything. The air was balmy, and even Janet rejoiced that she was permitted to live. She lay back in the carriage and thought how good these friends were to her, and mourned because she could never tell them why she had behaved so badly to them.

Mr. St. John was waiting to receive them, and his manner to her was just as kind and courteous as it had always been.

How Janet enjoyed those days of convalescence! Her room overlooked the waters, and the breeze that came through the window was salt and bracing.

The next day Mrs. St. John knocked on her door, saying,

"Do you feel like having a visitor?"

"Yes," said Janet, "I am only too glad! Why are you so kind to me, Mrs. St. John? If I were your own child you could not do more for me, and yet my conduct to you must seem despicable."

"I like you for yourself, Janet, and always shall. I dare say," she added, "you wonder what has brought us here. The fact is, Belle has had a serious illness, and the doctors ordered a change at once, so we have started for England and shall go leisurely along. Mr. St. John is doing duty for a friend while we are here. I fancy when we reach England it will be to remain. The cousin Mr. St. John left his living to has died, and my husband has been asked to return to his old place. In any case we shall not live in San Francisco again, for Belle's sake. But I must tell you the cause of her illness now, because we never mention it before

her. She has gone to the hospital to read to some of the patients, and we will just take advantage of her absence. Of course you have not heard of Mr. Curson's marriage, have you?"

"Married!" gasped the invalid. "To Belle?"

"No."

"Thank God!" cried Janet.

"He married Stella Ramona," said Mrs. St. John, remembering that she must not excite Janet. "But why are you so glad that he did not marry Belle?"

The tears came into Janet's eyes, and taking Mrs. St. John's hand in hers, she said,

"He was the cause of all my trouble; and now I can tell you everything." And she did.

"My poor girl!" said Mrs. St. John, clasping Janet in her arms. "How much you have suffered! And all alone too. How good and loyal you were to Belle! I'm afraid Belle must hear his name again, to clear you in her eyes. He was a villain!"

she added. "He actually came to see Belle after he was married, and never said anything about it. In fact the notice did not come out for quite a while after they were married."

From that day Janet threw aside medicine, and began to get strong and like herself once more. One day Mr. St. John said to her,

"My dear, I must communicate with your friends in Chico. I promised to do so as soon as we found you but I have waited until you were stronger."

Janet looked somewhat crestfallen, and said,

"Must I go back to them when I leave here?"

"Not unless you wish to, for you are not related to them; they have no claim on you."

"Not related?"

"No, but I must not anticipate. Mr. Henshaw has some business to transact with you, but he will tell you himself all about it. I will telegraph him tomorrow."

Mr. Henshaw started immedi-

ately upon receiving the dispatch, and was in Los Angeles very soon.

He greeted Janet warmly, and she was glad to see him, now that she no longer feared having to return to his wife and home.

He handed her the sealed package, and eight hundred dollars, saying that it had been left over from what her father gave into his keeping for her.

"Please tell me about my parents," said Janet. "I know so little."

He answered all her questions, speaking gently of poor Jack, as he called him, and then she opened the package.

It contained some pieces of jewelry, her mother's marriage certificate, the certificate of her birth, and a long letter written by her father. He told her in this letter who her people were, and Janet felt her cheeks tingle as she read. From "Henshaw's niece" to the titled aristocracy of England is a long way.

"Why," she cried, "papa would have been Lord Hamilton if he had

lived. I wonder if my grandfather is still alive? And I wonder if I shall ever see and know my kin?"

"I always knew there was blue blood in Jack Stanton," replied his faithful friend. "Well, my dear, I congratulate you with all my heart."

"Janet," said Mrs. St. John, "you are able now to meet the expense, you'd better go to England with us."

"I came down to offer Janet a home," said Mr. Henshaw, "and she is always welcome to it, but I think she'd better go to England with you. Though I shall be sorry to lose you for good, Janet."

"You were always kind to me, Uncle, and wherever I go I shall always remember you, but I think I will go to England with Mr. and Mrs. St. John since they so kindly invite me. I will try my luck with my real relations."

"Yes," said Mr. Henshaw meekly, "I hope they will be kinder to you than your imitation ones were."

"You were always kind to me,"

repeated Janet gently, and with the proper emphasis.

Mr. Henshaw returned to Chico, and the others soon began to make preparations for their journey.

Janet went to her late lodgings, redeemed her ring, paid Mrs. Smith liberally, and then took her and the four boys and treated them all to a good dinner. She then went to the hospital, paid for the time she was there, and made her nurse a handsome present.

"Did you ever get that question answered, Miss Nomer?" asked the white-capped little lady.

"No," said Janet, "I am not in a hurry to hear the answer now. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, you know. The world looks so much brighter to me now!"

"I should like to have said goodbye to Gladys and Mr. Farnam before I go," said Janet to Belle, "but I will write to her."

"How is the 'Helping Hand' progressing?"

"Finely; it is three times as large as when you saw it last."

"Mr. Farnam did a noble thing in enlarging that house of Miss Wise's," said Janet.

"And he and Gladys give so much time to it!" said Belle.

"Dear Gladys, she has such a sweet sunny nature! She deserves all good fortune that comes to her."

"Indeed she does," said Belle with equal earnestness.

CHAPTER X.

The leaves were just beginning to sprout green on the bough, the birds were singing and all nature was glad that the winter was past and spring was come again. It was spring in English lanes and meadows for Janet and Belle.

Wakefield Park in Surrey, the country seat of Lord Hamilton, was particularly attractive at this season. The chestnuts were in full bloom, the beeches in their gayest dress, and the young fawns, of which there was quite a herd, were frisking around their mothers.

Spring was earlier here than in most places in England. Perhaps because it was so sheltered from the winds. At any rate after driving along the country roads you are struck by the difference as soon as you enter the park gates.

Outside everything breathed of youth and brightness. Inside the

great mansion everything spoke of antiquity and former elegance.

The only occupant, excepting the servants, was Lady Hamilton, a grand old woman of nearly eighty years. Seated in her carved oaken chair, one would not take her to be more than sixty. Her hair was snow white, contrasting well with the delicate pink of her cheeks and her dark brown eyes. She was tall and had great dignity, and it was only when she arose that one noticed her bowed form.

This morning in spring she was closeted with her lawyer, Mr. Crew.

"Are you really decided to make your will, my lady?" he asked.

"Yes, Mr. Crew; I have given up all hope of ever seeing my son again. He must have died many years ago, or he would have communicated with his mother long before now, I am sure."

"And his wife?" asked the lawyer.

"I fear she is dead also. It was a sad, strange thing, their mysterious disappearance. She was a sweet woman and my boy was a generous.

warm-hearted fellow. Those were his good qualities, but he had so many bad ones! It was all my fault. He was my only boy and I spoiled him. Now I suffer for my folly."

"Was there not a child?" asked Mr. Crew.

"Yes, a little girl about two years old. Her name was Janet."

"The child may be living even if the parents are dead."

"Yes, I have thought of that. She would be nineteen or twenty years old now. I must make some provision for her if she is ever found."

"When does Lord Hamilton return, my lady?"

"I believe he is in England now. I shall leave Wakefield Park to him at the end of the year."

"Is it his wish?"

"No, but his father and my husband were enemies and I could not accept a favor at his hands. The Park is his and when he is ready to receive it I shall go away."

"You will go to Wiltshire, I understand?"

"Yes, my husband purchased a small place for me known as Beechwood. It is very pretty and quiet, but I shall not need it long. If my grandchild is ever found she may like to make it her country residence. That is why I sent for you, Mr. Crew. I wish to leave it to her, and if she or her heir is not found in fifty years, I wish it to be sold and the proceeds distributed among the poor."

"It shall be done as you wish, my lady."

The present Lord Hamilton's father was cousin to Lady Hamilton's husband. As Jack Stanton could not be found he was supposed to be dead, and as the present Lord Hamilton's father died before Jack's father, the title and estates passed to the present Lord Hamilton.

After the lawyer had gone, Lady Hamilton felt easier in mind than she had for a long time. She had provided for her unknown grandchild by leaving her all the money and real estate in her possession to dispose of.

She had felt very lonely since her husband's death, and time did not soften her sorrow much. She came of a long-lived race, or the troubles she had passed through would have worn her out long before the telling of our story.

She was sitting in her morning-room one sunny day in spring when the footman brought in a card saying, "Mrs. St. John wishes to speak to you on important business."

"Show her in, Wilson. I suppose she has come about some charity. I do not recognize the name."

Mrs. St. John advanced slowly, saying with her gentle smile, "How forward and lovely your park looks, Lady Hamilton!"

"People generally say that. I seldom go beyond the grounds now, so I cannot compare my place with others. I am a lonely old woman."

"Have you no children?" asked the gentle little lady.

"I never had but one, and he is dead, I fear."

"It is about that boy, my dear

Lady Hamilton, that I have come to speak to you."

"Is he alive? My boy! Ah, no, I dare not hope for that."

"No, madam, he is dead. He died six years ago, but he left a daughter to comfort you."

"And she is alive?"

"Yes, and she is in England waiting to come to you."

"Little Janet?"

"Yes, madam."

"Oh, this seems too strange and too good to be true! I can scarcely believe it."

"I can prove her claims beyond a shadow of doubt," said Mrs. St. John. "Here is her mother's marriage certificate, the certificate of her birth, some jewels which you may recognize, and a letter written by her father. You will know the writing doubtless."

"Yes, but my dear lady, the Tichbourne claimant proved all this and was an impostor in the end."

"Perhaps if you should see Janet,

you would recognize a likeness to your son, or her mother."

"Yes," said Lady Hamilton. "I could do that. Where is the child!"

"She is in the carriage, my lady. Shall I bring her in?"

Mrs. St. John left the room, and soon returned with Janet, who bowed timidly and would have remained standing some distance away, but Lady Hamilton called her, saying,

"Come close to me, my dear. I want to see whether you have Jack's eyes. They were dark brown like my own. His wife's were blue."

Janet came and knelt in front of her grandmother, and the old lady took her face between her two hands, and looked long and earnestly. At last she said,

"You are indeed Jack's child! Thank God! I have found you, my little Janet!"

She clasped Janet in her feeble arms, and they wept together, thinking of the dead. Then Lady Hamilton asked anxiously,

"And whose disposition and

character have you got, my dear? Father's or mother's?''

"They say I am like my mother, except in face and form.''

'Thank God for this too,'' murmured the ill-used mother. "Your mother was a good woman. You certainly look like your father. I am a foolish old woman! Perhaps I am easily persuaded to believe what I wish to be true. I must send for my lawyer and ask for his advice. Will you ladies come for dinner to-night, and meet him? We dine at eight o'clock.''

"With pleasure, Lady Hamilton,'' said Mrs. St. John.

Mr. Crew stayed after Mrs. St. John and Janet had left that night, to talk to Lady Hamilton.

"There cannot be the slightest doubt,'' said he. "Mrs. St. John is the wife of a clergyman, and beyond suspicion. I congratulate you, my lady, on having such a lovely grandchild. She has the manner of a lady, although she has lived all her life in America. I am quite charmed with

her. So dignified, gentle and attentive! She will make your old age happy. Now you have something to live for."

"It seems too good to be true, even now," said the lady. "I shall be so happy! I shall go myself to-morrow and bring her home."

CHAPTER XI.

"Well, Janet," said Mrs. St. John when they reached the hotel, "how do you like your grandmother? I think she is the loveliest old lady I have ever seen."

"So do I," said Janet softly. "I hope I can make her happy. And what a grand old place that is, Mrs. St. John. Are there many like it in England?"

"Any number, my dear. But I don't think there are many grander —or older, except those in ruins."

The next morning, very early for one so old, Lady Hamilton came in state to carry Janet home, insisting that Mrs. St. John should accompany her.

"And telegraph for your husband to come. I can never be grateful enough to you both for restoring to me my only grandchild. I want to thank him personally. Have you no children, Mrs. St. John?"

"Yes, Lady Hamilton, my daughter Belle, who is with her father now. She and Janet were schoolfellows, and have always been warm friends."

"I shall be delighted to welcome her, and shall expect them as soon as it is possible for them to arrive."

These were happy days for Janet. It pleased her greatly to be able to return some of the kindness the St. Johns had shown her, when she most needed it, and she was never tired of doing all in her power to make their visit a pleasant one.

Mr. St. John was anxious to return to his parish in Gloucestershire, now that he had made up his mind to do so. After spending a week at Wakefield Park, he and Mrs. St. John took their departure, leaving Belle, at Lady Hamilton's request, to remain for an indefinite time, that Janet might not be lonely. Janet knew that her first duty was to her grandmother, so she gave her much of her time reading, singing, playing, or telling her the story of her life in California. Lady Hamilton was

never tired of listening to this story, which seemed wonderful to her. She was not selfish, however, realizing that Janet was young and did not want to shut herself up entirely with an old woman. She insisted on the girls taking proper recreation. They loved to wander over the grounds. One day they found the picture gallery, and very soon Janet came running to her grandmother, saying,

"I believe I have found papa's and mama's portraits. Is that little baby intended for me?"

"Yes, my dear. They were taken the year before you all went to America. Do you remember your father?"

"Certainly I do. Why I was twelve years old when he died."

She had never told her grandmother the manner of his death, and was fully determined never to let her know, as it would grieve her and profit no one.

As soon as it became known in the neighborhood that Lady Hamilton's grandaughter had been found and returned to her, friends came from far and wide to call. Some came out

of curiosity, some because they remembered her mother or father, and others from kindness and consideration for Lady Hamilton.

Janet was invited out to dinners and teas and to pleasant garden parties. At the dinners old gentlemen would ask her all sorts of questions about California.

"How much wheat do they grow to the acre?" "What kind of cattle do they breed?" "What are horses worth out there?" Poor Janet knew nothing of agriculture, and many of her questioners put her down for an empty-headed girl of society. If they had asked her about mining she could have answered intelligently.

She was at a very stiff tea one afternoon when an elderly maiden cornered her saying,

"Come and tell me all about California, my dear. Is it true that a lady cannot walk down the San Francisco streets ?"

"Yes," said wicked Janet. "They never walk, they always ride."

"But I meant, was it safe, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, provided you have a tomahawk and bowie knife attached to your belt."

"How dreadful!" said Miss Buckram; "have you got yours with you?"

"No," said Janet good-humoredly, "I did not think I should need them here, shall I?"

"Dear me, no!" said the lady; "but, are the Indians always dressed in war-paint and feathers?"

"Almost always, when you meet them in San Francisco."

This was strictly true. Her true stories of life in the Golden State were so wonderful, and so generally doubted, that it was only natural for her to enlarge upon them a little and play upon the queer ideas of her puzzled listeners.

Lady Barry, an old friend of Lady Hamilton, took a great interest in Janet from the first, and having no daughters of her own insisted on taking her to London for the season. Her grandmother reluctantly gave

her consent. She had grown so fond of Janet that she hated to part with her, but she said,

"I will not stand in the way of the child's happiness, and if you think it is right for her to go, why take her, Lady Barry."

Janet protested, saying,

"It is not right for me to leave grandmama, and I would rather not go."

However, in the end, Lady Barry had her way, and they went. Just about this time Belle returned to her parents, so Lady Hamilton was left alone.

Lady Barry's town house was in Kensington close to Kensington Palace. It was magnificent, and they had everything money could buy, horses, carriages, pictures, and a large retinue of servants.

Lady Barry was a handsome woman of about forty-five, very fond of society, and she foresaw lots of gayety for herself in chaperoning Janet, for she thought the girl would be much admired. She was right;

Janet was not as thin and spiritless as she had been in California, and was really a beautiful girl, always simply but elegantly dressed. She rode finely in the Western style, and always had escorts for her morning rides in the park. Her music was also very much praised, and she was always the first to be asked to play or sing. She soon had any number of admirers, and Lady Barry was surprised that she appeared to care no more for one than another, but treated them all alike.

Young Lord Temple, Lady Barry's nephew, was constant in his attentions. He sent Janet flowers every day, rode with her, walked with her, made boating-parties for her and always listened, entranced, to her singing.

Janet had no suspicion that he had more than friendly thoughts for her, until one day, when they were returning from Hurlingham, Janet expressed a wish to go into Westminster Abbey for a few minutes to see the interior in the evening.

Lady Barry gave her permission to go, but remained in the carriage. They strayed into the North Transept, and Janet was standing in front of Bullers's monument when Lord Temple said,

"My college chum, and chiefest friend, is going to take a wife in June, and he wants me to be married on the same day. A double wedding, you know."

"You surprise me, I didn't know you were engaged," said Janet, candid and unsuspecting. "Shall you comply with his wish?"

"If you are willing, Janet."

"What difference can my willingness make, Lord Temple?"

Janet looked as haughty as an empress; (or an American servant girl!)

"Please don't call me Lord Temple. You must have seen, Janet, that I love you. I have tried to show you my devotion in every way in my power and to win your favor."

"My dear Lord Temple, I had no idea of such a possibility; you have

not known me a month yet. I am so sorry, if indeed you are in earnest, for I can never marry you."

"Are you engaged to some one in California? Is that what makes you so cold and indifferent?"

"No," said Janet, "I am not engaged to anyone, and have almost made up my mind never to marry. Let us return to Lady Barry, she will wonder what is keeping us."

They were both so quiet on their return home that Lady Barry slyly teased them about "lovers' quarrels." This caused them to maintain a still more perfect silence. The drive was an unpleasant one for all concerned.

For two or three days Janet did not see Lord Temple, and then he was more kindly attentive than ever. One day he said to her laughingly,

"It will be the object of my life to win you, Janet, so you might as well yield now. I could make you very happy if you would give me the right and privilege."

"Dear Lord Temple," said Janet distressed, "please give up your wild

idea. My answer was final. You will only make life unhappy for us both, if you persist in your attentions."

"I shall not surrender you without a struggle, Janet," he answered firmly. "A woman's 'no' often changes to 'yes.'"

"You are a stubborn man," said Janet, laughing. "I can only warn you that you waste your time."

Lady Barry came into her room one morning, saying,

"Have you heard of 'Sigma,' Janet? All London is raving about him."

"What is he?" asked Janet. "A new poet or a trained monkey?"

"Nonsense Janet! He is a little lame boy with a marvelous voice; I have tickets for to-night. We must go for a short time before Mrs. Vane's ball."

"With pleasure," said Janet. "I love good music and I love a child's voice."

Lord Temple called in the evening

and asked permission to escort the ladies to the concert.

As soon as Sigma made his appearance, Janet fairly screamed with delight and surprise,

"Why, it is Reggie!"

"What do you mean?" said Lady Barry, a little severely. "I thought you were suddenly ill."

"Pardon me, Lady Barry, Sigma is an old friend of mine, a little cripple from California. I must see him. Can you find out where he is living for me, Lord Temple?"

"Certainly, Miss Stanton. Tell me, do *all* beautiful things come from California?"

"You are incorrigible!" cried Janet, laughing. "His voice is indeed marvelous, but what a shame to ask for so many encores! He looks so delicate still."

"He is very delicate," said Lady Barry. "But the lady who is with him takes such good care of him he will not come to any harm, at least if she can help it."

"Indeed he will not," said

Janet. "She was my school mistress in the old days, and a better or more unselfish woman never lived. I must go and see them to-morrow."

Sigma at last saw Janet and knew his old friend. When the flowers fell in a brilliant shower at his feet, he picked up a bunch of forget-me-nots she had taken from her dress and thrown him, and smiled.

The house applauded wildly and just then Lord Barry came to take them home.

He was a well-made man of fifty, with a fine face a little spoiled by a settled expression of irritability, due doubtless to the state of his liver. His eyes were good tempered; his mouth was not. It turned down too much at the corners. Nature meant him for a good-natured man, but rich dinners had interfered with her wise intentions.

He and Lady Barry had been very much in love with each other when they were married, but that was many years before. Now they often wondered how they ever could have

been so foolishly devoted. Still they had a deep regard for each other, and never quarreled except in private. They had entirely different tastes and pursuits. Lady Barry was fond of society: he hated it. He loved racing, deer stalking, salmon fishing, shooting and fox-hunting. He spent all his time in pursuing these pleasures, except two weeks during the London season, which Lady Barry claimed, that the world might see them together, and apparently on good terms. He was bored to death the whole time he was there, and to tell the truth Lady Barry was not at all sorry when the two weeks had expired.

The season was drawing to a close and Lady Barry was quite disappointed that Janet had not announced her engagement to one of her numerous admirers.

She entered the girl's room one morning and found her writing letters. She stole up behind her and said, "This is not kind of you, Janet,

to communicate the news to others when you have not told me."

"What news, Lady Barry?"

"The news of your engagement, of course. Come, now, it's no use trying to conceal the truth. Confess! you are engaged to Lord Temple, are you not?"

"No, Lady Barry, I am not engaged to any one. Must a girl always get engaged during her first season?"

"'Must' is a strong word, Janet. You know an English girl is free to use her own will in the matter. But any girl with half your chances would have been engaged before now. Why you might have had your choice of a dozen. You can't dislike them all!"

"Do women marry when they have no personal dislike for a man? Are there no stronger ties necessary?"

"My dear Janet, very few marry for what the world calls love, now-a-days. Wealth or a good position is oftener the object to be sought. And when they do marry for love,

how long does it last? I was as much in love with Lord Barry as any woman could be with a man, and how long did it last? Believe me, it is better to be good comrades from the first and never expect anything more."

"Then I most certainly will never marry," said Janet. "But why should love always weaken if lovers try to keep it alive?"

"I don't know, dear, but it does. Look over your circle of acquaintances and tell me how many, after ten years of married life, are really still in love with each other."

"Well," said Janet, "people do not always proclaim their love to the world. They become less demonstrative naturally enough after the first few years of marriage, but that is no sign they have lost their love for each other."

"My dear girl, keep your belief, and I only hope that you may never have it shaken or disproven."

Miss Wise and Reggie were delighted to see Janet, and she spent

the greater part of the day with them. After talking a little while Reggie went to lie down, and Miss Wise said, "How do you think he looks, Janet?"

"Not more delicate than he used to, but don't you think the work too hard for him?"

"On the contrary, he would not have lived until now, if his voice had not been discovered. He grieved so much that he was so useless and helpless. It made him very unhappy. But now his little face is radiant with happiness, and it gives me comfort to see him so. I dread to think that some day, in spite of all my efforts to save him, he will slip away from me. I sometimes think that day is not far distant. He is my life, my joy! What shall I do when he is gone?"

"Don't think of it, Miss Wise. You have him at present. Do not anticipate trouble."

"When he was so sick in California, I never thought this happiness was in store for him. But tell me about your own fairy story, dear Janet. I have not heard half enough."

CHAPTER XII.

When Janet returned to Lady Barry's, it was to find that Lord Barry was seriously ill and his wife had been telegraphed for. The servants were busy with preparations for departure. Janet was not sorry to leave London and hoped to go without again seeing Lord Temple, but she was disappointed. In the evening he called, and finding that she was about to leave, asked permission to call on her at Wakefield Park.

"I would much rather you did not," said Janet, frankly.

"But you would not refuse to see me?" he asked.

"Certainly," answered the cruel maid. "Unless you come as any friend comes and expect no more than the courtesy any friend receives."

"Janet, I love you; why won't you be reasonable and love me in return and tell me so?"

"Because I do not. Why will

you persist when there are scores of girls who would be more suitable—"

"And more willing. But they are title-hunters, Janet, and I'm too spry a bird to be caught in their traps. I want you."

"Lord Temple," said Janet, weary of the subject, "I am very tired, will you please excuse me for to-night?"

She crossed the room slowly and said "Good-bye" at the door. The young man ran after her, crying desperately, "Janet, you must hear me!" but she was gone, and he stood alone in the hall.

The next day they left London, Janet returning to Wakefield Park and Lady Barry to her husband, whom she found slightly better.

Janet was glad to be at home, and said, "I will never leave you again for so long a time, grandmama. I was not a bit happy in London. I do not like the life, and I never want to spend another season there. Most of the men one meets either

can not talk sense or think a girl can not."

"My dear, I thought you were a success and getting plenty of admiration, and proposals too. That is what Lady Barry wrote me."

"Yes, grandmama, but if I found the men so tiresome for a short time, how could I live a whole life with one of them. It would be impossible for me to marry a society man."

"Well, dear, you are not obliged to marry, and perhaps you will be happier single. We shall be very happy at Wakefield Park, Janet. Just you and I together. You are a good child to give up your life to an old woman. It will not be for long, Janet. I am eighty-one years old. Few people live much longer. And I am happier than I ever hoped to be."

CHAPTER XIII.

About a month after this, Janet was returning from church, dallying by the wayside, "For it was all in the pleasant weather," when she heard some one call her name.

She turned, astonished, for the voice was familiar. In a moment she was shaking hands with Mr. Duncan.

"Excuse me for calling so loudly, but I was so glad to see you that I could not let you escape."

"Mr. Duncan, I *am* surprised to see you, and how does it happen?"

"I live near here, Miss Stanton. But what brought *you* here, may I ask?"

"My home," said Janet. "I live near here too, at Wakefield Park."

"At Wakefield Park!" Mr. Duncan echoed in surprise.

"Yes," said Janet, simply. "My father was Lady Hamilton's son.

When I discovered this I came home to England."

"Then we are neighbors, Miss Stanton. I returned only last evening, so had not heard the news. I am very glad to meet you again. May I walk home with you?" His face beamed with joy and Janet looked bright and happy.

"Yes, do walk home with me," she answered him. "I want to hear all about California friends."

"Oh, I have not been in California since you were there; but I shal have to go again in the summer."

"Do you know that the St. Johns are living near us?"

"Really? How strange! How can Mr. St. John content himself in England, away from his charge? But perhaps he has retired from the Church."

"On the contrary," said Janet. "He has his old living again and seems perfectly happy in it. He spends most of his time in study, keeps a curate, and Mrs. St. John

and Belle take care of his parish for him."

"Miss St. John is not married then?"

"No," said Janet. "Have you not heard?" She told him the story of Curson's villainy—a portion of it.

"May I call this evening?" he asked as they parted.

"Certainly you may," said Janet, smiling. "You are the earliest friend I know, Mr. Duncan."

He soon became a constant visitor and cheered many an hour for Janet, who was faithful in her attendance on her grandmother. Lady Hamilton was now confined to her bed, and daily growing weaker. Her mind frequently wandered and she lived entirely in the past, with her boy. Six months after Janet's return from London, her grandmother died, leaving all she possessed to her granddaughter, Janet Stanton.

After the funeral Janet went to the St. Johns, the dear friends who had been so kind to her through all her troubles.

"You have always brought happiness out of sorrow for me," she said to them gratefully.

"And I hope we shall do so this time, my dear," said Mrs. St. John.

The days were peaceful, and Janet soon became interested in playing Lady Bountiful to Belle's beloved poor. She was returning from a visit to one of them upon a sunny Autumn day when Mr. Duncan met her.

He looked so serious that Janet asked him what had happened.

"Nothing," said he smiling, "but I would like to speak to you if I may."

They went into the Rectory garden, and strolled along under the drooping, purple beach trees. Janet's head was drooping too, and her heart was beating fast, for she knew what was to come. Mr. Duncan walked beside her, a tall fair man, with dark blue eyes, and yellow hair, a light moustache curled above a firm mouth and chin. Altogether he was a fine specimen of fair clean English manhood.

He had a high, sweet voice, and a

deliberate manner of speaking, which gave earnestness and sincerity to his words.

"I hope you will forgive me, Janet, for coming to you so soon after Lady Hamilton's death, but I missed you so much after you left the Park."

"Has the young Lord taken possession yet?" asked Janet, with a maiden's effort to ward off the fateful question.

"No," he replied with rather a peculiar intonation, "he has not taken possession yet. But Janet, I cannot wait any longer before learning my fate." He took her hands, and looking in her face, said, "Janet, you know what I would say. You must have known it long ago. I love you fondly and truly. I have loved you since the first day I saw you. Do you remember? In a canon in California? You were crying then, Janet. But if you will let me take care of you, I will try to guard you from every trouble in the future. Janet. will you be my wife?"

"You were always good to me!

But how could you love me, if you knew my father's life ?"

"I did, Janet, and I longed to take you from the Henshaws, and would have asked you to be mine, then, had you not so suddenly disappeared, first to San Francisco, and then faded clear out of sight."

"And when I was not found, and people began to mistrust me, did you never doubt ?"

"Never, my darling, never."

"I believe you," said Janet; "but let me tell you all of my life that you do not know; your mind may be changed in the matter."

He listened, holding her hands, until the sad story was finished. Then drawing her softly into his arms, he whispered,

"My dear girl ! Who would not be proud of so brave a wife?"

After a moment, he said with a smile,

"I have a confession to make too, Janet; perhaps after I tell you who I am, you will not give me the right to care for you."

"Are you not Malcolm Duncan?" asked Janet. Then she added trustfully, "But I don't care who you are, I love you for your very self!"

"You tempt me, Janet!" he cried, laughing. "Yes, I am Malcolm Duncan, and since my father's death, Lord Hamilton. I knew you, my sweet cousin, out there in the California wilds, where I happened to stumble on traces of the only man who stood between my father and his title. You forgive me? Yes? Well, then I have waited long and patiently, Janet. You owe me a kiss!"

The St. Johns were delighted when they were told the news. They declared that two people could not be better suited to each other.

In a month they were married, and it was a very quiet wedding, Lord and Lady Hamilton leaving directly after the breakfast for a trip on the continent.

Malcolm shared with Janet the pleasure she found in all the places they visited. She was charmed with Lucerne, interested in Rome and Pom-

peii, fascinated with the ruins of the old castles in Germany.

At Monte Carlo they were watching the games, when suddenly Janet cried like one in distress,

"Take me away from this dreadful place, Macolm! Look at that man! I remember that look on my father's face, and I never want to see it again as long as I live. How *can* they do it? It is horrible! Please take me away."

They traveled just as their fancy dictated and Janet was bright with happiness. She was a beautiful woman and Malcolm was justly proud of the admiration she excited.

In Paris they again heard Sigma. He was making more of a sensation there than he made in London even. His voice was said to be divine, and truly there did not seem to be anything earthly about it. Janet was glad to hear from Miss Wise, that he was a little stronger, and that both he and his aunt were happy and contented.

Janet and Malcolm remained in

Paris three weeks, and visited everything of interest.

They had just returned from Fontainebleau, where they had been spending the day. Janet was tired so she went at once to her room. Malcolm said he had an errand, and would join her in a little while. He had heard her admire a diamond necklace in one of the windows, as they passed in the morning. Thinking this a good chance to get it for her, and sure she would protest if she knew, he left her to rest before dinner, and went for the jewels.

It always gave him the greatest pleasure to get for her anything she desired, and knowing this, Janet seldom admired anything openly, fearing that he would bankrupt himself to please her. But this necklace had once adorned the slender throat of a queen, and Janet's cry of admiration was involuntary.

Malcolm returned in time for dinner and suggested that they hear Sigma once more before leaving Paris.

When Janet stood before him, beau-

tiful in a gown of fawn-colored satin and soft chiffon, he clasped the necklace about her white throat, and fastened a diamond butterfly among the puffs of her brown hair.

The house was crowded when they entered and immediately many glasses were directed to their box, for there was no lady in the house so beautiful as the English woman in the lovely costume of brown with the magnificent diamonds flashing on her breast and in her hair.

Sigma excelled himself. He was recalled three times, and the people were still wildly shouting his name.

He came again, and commenced to sing a simple song, dear to Americans, "Way down upon the Suannee river." His face was flushed with joyous excitement, and the house listened, breathless. Suddenly he faltered, swayed and fell into the arms of his aunt, who rushed forward to catch him while the curtain was quickly dropped.

"Let us go to her," said Janet

rising. "Will they let us, Malcolm, do you think?"

"Follow me," he said. "I can manage it."

After some difficulty they reached the room where Reggie lay. Miss Wise was holding Reggie and trying to quiet him. He was dreadfully excited and the blood was still flowing from his nose and mouth. Miss Wise feared he would strangle. "Will a doctor never come," she cried, "to stop this bleeding before it is too late?"

Malcolm flew for a doctor, and soon brought him in his carriage, but not before the boy had fainted from loss of blood.

Soon Sigma was carried on a mattress to his hotel. Janet went with him and his aunt. She could not comfort her, who declared it was all her fault.

"I ought not to have allowed him to go back the fourth time, but he begged so hard that at last I permitted him, and now I shall lose my darling."

Reggie lay half unconscious and too weak to move. After a while he

said, opening his big solemn eyes,

"I wish the organ was not so loud —please ask them to play softer, Auntie! The lovely music! Do you hear it? Auntie, did I sing so well, or did they only applaud me because they were sorry for me?"

He rambled on all night, sometimes talking sense, but always returning to the music?

Janet returned to her hotel in the morning and tried to get a few hours' rest.

"We must not leave tomorrow," she said. "I could not let Miss Wise remain here alone. You will stay here with me a little while longer, Malcolm, will you not?"

"Certainly, dear," he replied. "I will send a telegram at once, explaining the reason of our delay."

Reggie never rose from his bed. He lay there listening to the noises in the street, very quietly, watching everything and everybody about him with observing eyes.

When the sun had set and evening came on, he loved to watch the bright

lights in the street. The strange fancy about the organ never left him. Sometimes it was so loud that he wanted it stopped, sometimes it was soft and sweet, and he called others to listen.

Sometimes he would rise in bed, put out his little hands and try to stop the music; then his aunt would bend over him and stroke his hair. Very soon he would be calm, and say,

"Auntie, you always make the organ play softly."

Then he would be quiet for a time and beg his aunt to lay her head on his pillow and rest.

"You must be so tired of the music, Auntie, and you cannot hear me sing; it drowns my voice."

The people around him changed and at times he could not recognize them.

The doctors held a consultation over him, but he never asked what they said, although he watched their every movement with his large, bright eyes.

He knew Janet and said to her,

"Don't be sorry for me, Janet; I am very, very happy. But how the music swells! Sometimes it seems like six organs playing all at once, and sometimes only one, a long distance off—Auntie, did I ever see my mother?"

"No, darling, you never did."

"I think she is listening to the music. Sometimes I see her. I think it must be my mother, for she looks at me so lovingly. She does not seem to mind when it plays ever so loudly and she must hear it, for she is quite near."

Toward the last he never complained of the music being loud; it was always soft.

"So soft you can hardly hear it, Auntie," he would say. "Listen, there are voices! What are they singing? May I join them, Auntie? It is divine! How dark it is getting! I can't see; I can only hear, and it is so beautiful. Auntie, now I can see! Such a beautiful place! Let us go together!"

Miss Wise did not realize that he

was gone, but lay on his pillow stroking his hair for some time. At last she said, "Reggie, can you hear the music still?"

He did not answer and she took his hand. It felt cold and all at once the truth flashed through her mind. She looked at Janet, then said earnestly, "He has joined the choir invisible, and I am left alone."

Janet drew her gently from the room.

After the funeral Miss Wise was persuaded to go to England with Janet and remain with her until they all went to California together in the spring. Lord Hamilton was compelled to go about some business connected with the mine.

The St. Johns were all at Wakefield Park to welcome them, and Belle once again had a piece of important news to whisper. She was engaged to Neal Duncan, Malcolm's brother, who was a clergyman, curate for Mr. St. John.

It was a very happy party that assembled at dinner, the first eve-

ning after their return home. Even Miss Wise could not be sad. In speaking of Reggie to Mr. St. John she said, "I am so glad he had these two years of happiness to brighten his life, and I am quite sure it did not hasten his death in the least. He used to be always grieving over his helpless, useless life."

"Where is the gentleman who discovered his voice and sent him to Europe?" asked Mrs. St. John.

"He was very ill the last time I heard from him. He never left San Francisco. Reggie insisted on paying back all the money that had been spent on him, and I believe the old gentleman was glad of it, for there were kin of his who came to need it, and I learn that he has left his fortune to them. Dear Reggie! His last hours were peaceful, filled with harmonies unheard by us, and I believe that he saw his mother before he died."

CHAPTER XIV.

On the first of April the City of Paris sailed majestically out to sea, bearing our three friends. They had a stormy passage, but did not mind it in the least, being all good sailors. In fact Janet declared that her spirits always rose with a storm at sea.

The journey across the continent was quite uneventful, as it generally is to those to whom it is not new. They reached San Francisco at ten P. M., only ten and a half days after leaving Liverpool.

Gladys was the first to welcome them back to California. She had decorated their rooms with such an abundance of flowers as only California can produce in the early spring.

"And how is the 'Home' progressing, Gladys?" asked Janet.

"It is at a standstill," said Gladys. "Part of it is self-supporting, and of course that goes on, but we can

not keep up the other part much longer for want of funds. You have not heard of papa's losses, have you? There has been great depression in business the last few years and papa was one of the unfortunate ones. He lost almost everything. He was able to pay his creditors in full, but there is very little left. He has taken a position and I earn my own living and help support the house."

"Dear Gladys," said Janet, "I am so sorry to hear this. How long since it happened?"

"I have been earning my living for three months now," said Gladys, laughing, "and it is not half so hard as it sounds."

"I found it hard enough," said Janet with a shudder. "Tell me what you are doing, Gladys?"

"Well, I decorate houses and tables for parties and I have nearly a dozen houses where I go every other morning to arrange the flowers and dust the bric-a-brac. Then I have other houses where I go to mend the

linen when it comes from the laundry, and others where I take care of the children in the morning while the nurse is occupied, and altogether I make quite a little sum."

"Indeed I am sure everyone is glad of your bright face in the house. I don't wonder that you found it easy to get employment, dear, but I am sorry that you need to do it."

"Don't be sorry for me, dear. I am quite happy, or should be if mama did not worry over our losses so much."

Later in the day Miss Wise said, "I have decided what to do with my life and Reggie's money. I shall give both to the 'Helping Hand' and return the money Mr. Farnam put into it. Perhaps it will be enough to start him in business again, and you know, after all, the Home is mine for I started it."

When Mr. Farnam was told of her plan, he declared he would not touch a cent of her money; but she was just as firm, insisting that she had more than enough for the require-

ments of the Home at its present size. At last Mr. Farnam compromised, and took the money for a time until he should be able to replace it, und then it was proposed, with the help of Lord Hamilton and Janet, to enlarge the Home until it should be something like the "Peoples' Palace" in London.

Mr. Farnam said he had discovered one thing through the loss of his fortune; namely, that it was possible to be happy and be poor.

"I do not sympathize with the poor half so much as I did. And I will take back another statement I made. Poverty is not the greatest curse on earth. Health, I think, is the greatest blessing, and I am not sure that the loss of it is not the greatest curse."

"If we were all blessed with your disposition or your daughter's, we might see it as you do. But I know I am happier now than when I was a poor young man, glad to get a position as superintendent of the Chico mines," said Lord Hamilton.

"Yes," said Janet. "And I know how terribly unhappy I was when I was glad to get a place as nurse-maid, and how happy I am now."

"Ah," laughed Gladys, "it isn't money that makes you two so happy. It is because you have each other."

After spending a week in San Francisco and seeing Miss Wise installed as president of the "Home," Malcolm said he must go to Chico, and asked Janet if she cared to accompany him.

"Of course I do," said she. "I should like to see the old place again, in spite of everything. And I would not miss seeing Mr. Henshaw, for he was very kind to me."

"By the way," said Gladys, "have you heard about Stella? She left Mr. Curson before she had been married to him a year, but not before he had gambled away nearly all her fortune. She has gone to Spain to her aunt. She is broken in health, spirits and fortune. I really feel sorry for her."

"Well" said Janet, "she nearly

ruined our dear Belle's life. Perhaps she has got only what she deserves."

Mrs. Henshaw was so very obsequious and deferential that Janet disliked her almost more in this new role than in the days when she received nothing from her but unkindness. Mr. Henshaw was the same kind soul he had always been, and the girls were not much changed. They visited the canon again where they had first met and the red-woods where they saw the bear.

When they returned to San Francisco on their way home they found that Gladys was not well, so Janet easily persuaded Mr. Farnam to let her go to England with them for a visit.

A few months after their return to Wakefield Park, Lord and Lady Hamilton were made completely happy by the birth of an heir. Lord Temple was its godfather and Gladys the godmother. There was every indication that Lord Temple hoped to console himself for the "cruelty" of Janet, by the possession of her bright little friend from America. He was

not at all dismayed by the knowledge that Gladys had no money, as he had plenty for both, and this argument, much briefer than the discourses of Mr. Farnam on finance, was not refuted by that kind and good man.

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